WILD WEST WEEKLY

A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

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YOUNG WILD WEST'S APACHE TOKEN; OR, THE TRAIL THAT LED TO THE VALLEY OF GOLD.

By An Old Scout.



The dying Apache tore loose his belt and held up something in his left hand. "The Token of the Apaches!" he said, feebly. "It will take the brave palefaces safely over the trail to the Valley of Gold! My tongue is not crooked, Young Wild West."

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YOUNG WILD WEST'S APACHE TOKEN

OR,

The Trail that Led to the Valley of Gold

BY AN OLD SCOUT.

CHAPTER I.

THE FOUR OLD SOLDIERS, AND WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM.

In a lone cabin in the Tucson Mountains four men were gathered one night, a few years ago, when it was dangerous to travel through parts of Arizona, on account of lawless bands of Indians, whites and Mexicans, who were wont to demand toll, and in case it was refused, were known to kill.

Though the cabin mentioned was slightly less than fifty miles from Tucson, it was in one of the wildest spots that could be found in the whole territory.

Built on the rugged mountain slope and almost hidden from view by the trees that grew in rich profusion, the cabin was suggestive of civilization, yet the dismal aspect caused by the rotten-thatched roof and dislocated logs at one end would have caused the ordinary observer to think that it was a relic of the days gone by.

It was in the rainy season, and when the four men we have mentioned came upon the lone cabin at the close of a drizzly day they welcomed it with delight.

It was not quite dark when it appeared before them through the dripping foliage, and they promptly slid from the backs of the lazy burros they had been riding and hurried to the door.

But when they found it half open and hanging by one hinge they knew right away that there was a small chance of getting a hot supper there unless they did the cooking themselves.

The cabin was deserted, and as they made a further investigation they concluded that it had been deserted for a rather long time.

The rain dripped through the holes in the thatched roof and the damp weather for the past two or three weeks had wrought a musty odor there.

But it was better than nothing, and the four travelers accepted it gladly.

While one of them busied himself kindling a fire in the rude fireplace, so they might boil their coffee and broil some of the venison they had with them, the rest went out and cut cedars to repair the damaged roof.

By the time it began to grow dark they had made it quite comfortable and were ready to enjoy their supper.

Having left Tucson but the day before, they were pretty well supplied with provisions.

As we find them they had just finished their supper, and they were sitting about the fire on the hearth, enjoying their pipes.

They had all passed the age of fifty, but were quite hale and hearty and looked as though they were used to hardships.

On the floor of the cabin were piled picks, shovels and pans, such as are used by gold prospectors, so it was easy to guess that the quartette had started out in quest of gold, the magnet that attracts the population of the earth, but which so few ever reach.

The fact was that the four men were veterans of the Civil War, who had made a pact to come to Arizona and seek their fortunes.

They were poor men, and being of an adventurous nature, they did not fear the dangers and hardships they were likely to run across.

When they left Tucson to start for the gold fields they had spent about all the money they had raked and scraped to come West with, but they were happy in their expectations.

They were armed with revolvers and hunting knives and a rifle and shotgun had been brought along, so they might be able to shoot what game they needed.

"Well, Dave," said one of them, as he knocked the ashes from his pipe, "this is the second night out, so I guess you had better call the roll, to find out if we are all

here. It has been a tough day, and it may be that some of us have got lost."

Though this was said in the way of a joke, the man called Dave solemnly took a note book from his pocket, and fishing out a pencil, opened the book and called out:

"Billy Owens."

"Here!" came the promptly reply from the man reclining almost at full length on the floor.

"Mike Kelly."

"Here, bedad!"

"Martin McGowan."

"I'm here, Dave."

"Dave Romer. I'm here, of course, or I wouldn't be callin' ther roll. Well, Billy, we're all here, so that's one consolation, ain't it?"

"Yes, Dave, that's right. We've been pretty good friends since we left the army, and even though we wasn't all in ther same regiment, we all done our duty."

"Faith! I thought we was to forget that we were ever bein' sogers, Billy," spoke up Mike Kelly. "Don't yer know that we was after agreein' that we was ter be young men jest out of college, who were dead broke, an' searchin' for fortune."

"That's right, Mike. I forgot about it. We are just young men, and we are in Arizona looking for gold, which we are going to find, too; and then we'll go back home and live in comfort the rest of our lives."

There was a solemn nod of approval from all hands at this.

"We're here in Arizona, an' there ain't no one to worry much about us if we never get back," said McGowan, shaking his head. "None of us has got wives to worry after us, though we've all had 'em, an' good women they were, too."

"That's right, Martin. But don't talk about what's passed," Owens observed. "We are startin' life over ag'in, and what's done must be forgotten."

"I stand corrected, Billy. Now then, since it is kind of gloomy outside, an' mighty comfortable here, s'pose we have a little game of draw poker, just to pass away the time?"

"Poker?" queried Romer, with a grin. "What are we goin' to play poker with? I ain't got no money."

"Neither have I," was the reply, while McGowan looked at him pityingly. "But we've all got our soldier buttons, haven't we? We'll make out that each button is a lump of gold, an' we'll play poker till one man gits all ther buttons. Then the winner can give them back ag'in."

To some this proposition might appear ridiculous, but the way McGowan's hearers took to it showed that they did not think that way.

They were just as much delighted as though each had been staked with a pile of money, and were going to have a quiet little game.

Kelly threw some more pine boughs on the fire and they took positions where they would be able to see the cards.

McGowan had the cards, and though the pack was rather greasy, they were all there.

The buttons they had saved from their old army uniforms were brought out, too.

Dave Romer had seventeen of them, while the rest had sixteen apiece.

"Each button represents a twenty-dollar lump of gold," said McGowan, a grin on his tanned face. "One button ther ante an' one button ther limit. Cut for deal, boys."

The cards were cut and it fell to the lot of Owens to deal first.

The game went on and the players were as much interested as though it had been for real money."

"I'll bet you twenty dollars!" "And I'll call you!" sounded just the same as it might have had the game been for "blood."

So absorbed were the four that they did not notice the dripping form of an Indian appear in the doorway of the cabin.

The intruder must have approached cautiously on seeing the light from the fire, but when he got there, and saw what was going on, he straightened up and looked at the scene, a fiendish smile playing about his painted features.

As he listened to the bets that were being made, and his eyes caught the glint of the brass buttons as they were put in the pot, the redskin surely thought there was plenty of gold there.

He looked and listened for a full minute and then he stepped back and was lost in the darkness and rain.

Ten minutes passed and then half a dozen stealthy forms crept up to the cabin and looked through the doorway and the old soldiers as they played their game so earnestly.

And still none of them thought there was anything like danger lurking at the door of the cabin.

"Well, here's my last twenty, boys!" said Owens just then. "It's got ter be a show-down. What have yer got?"

The cards were laid down, and as Owens found that his hand of three jacks won he uttered a whoop of delight.

"Ugh!"

It was one of the Indians who uttered the grunt.

Then the four poker players looked up and found that they had visitors.

"Hello!" exclaimed Romer, springing to his feet. "What's this? Injuns, as I live!"

"Ugh!" grunted the redskin, who was evidently the leader of the half a dozen. "Palefaces have nice fire; Injuns want to get dry."

"Well, I ain't got no objections, as far as I'm concerned. But are you honest Injuns, that's ther question?"

"We good Apaches," declared the leader, who had so many feathers in his head-dress that it was easy to guess that he was a chief.

But in spite of the fact that he declared that they were good Indians, the four old soldiers did not seem to be quite at their ease.

They had been rudely disturbed in their game, and with half a dozen redskins, all of whom having daubs and streaks of yellow and black paint on their faces, to stay with them over night, the prospect was not a pleasant one.

The Apaches moved up to the fire and crowded them away from it.

"Palefaces got something to eat?" asked the chief, looking at Romer, probably because he had been the one to do the talking when they entered.

"No; not much," and Romer shook his head, because he knew they had nothing to spare in that line.

"Palefaces got plenty of gold?"

"No! We ain't got no gold, at all. About a dollar an' sixty-five cents is ther amount of our wealth."

"Ugh!"

The rest of the redskins grunted, too, and then they all grinned in a peculiar way.

"Paleface heap much lie!" said the chief, suddenly, and a long-barreled revolver was pulled from under the dripping blanket he had wrapped about him.

Each of the others drew some kind of a weapon, and then it was that the four gold seekers turned pale, no doubt wishing that they had never come all the way to Arizona to hunt for wealth.

Romer was at a loss to make a reply, so Owens spoke up.

"If you don't believe that we ain't got no gold you kin search us, Injuns. But what Dave said was just right."

"You play poker for gold; you got plenty. Apaches want gold, or they kill palefaces."

"We was only foolin'. It was soger buttons we was playin' with. We ain't got no gold."

"Ugh! Apaches kill palefaces, because they lie!"

A threatening move was made by the villainous redskins, and then a shout for help went up from the frightened men.

The next moment the lithe form of a boy attired in a fancy hunting suit of buckskin crossed the threshold and appeared before them.

"Hold up your hands, you red galoots!" he called out in a ringing voice. "I reckon you've made a little mistake. You can't rob these men!"

CHAPTER II.

HOW THE INDIANS WERE KICKED OUT.

The thieving Apaches were thunderstruck when they say the boy, and heard his ringing words.

There was a revolver in either of his hands, and he certainly looked as though he meant business.

Up went the hands of the redskins, as though they were governed by clockwork.

Then a tall man, who was attired similarly to the dashing-looking boy, stepped into the cabin.

"I reckon you've got 'em, Wild," he observed, a grim smile showing on his tanned and weather-beaten face. "It's a mighty good thing that we happened ter hear ther signal, ain't it? Here's four galoots here what's in putty bad shape—or would have been if we hadn't catched on ther Injun signal. Ain't they a measly lot, now! I reckon we'd better kick ther stuffin' out of ther lot of 'em, an' then turn 'em out in the rain, with no clothes ter wear!"

"No, Charlie, we won't be as hard on them as that. But I reckon we'll make them understand they've made a mighty big mistake in bothering these men."

"Thank yer, gentlemen! Thank yer!" spoke up Dave Romer just then. "I've been all through ther War of ther Rebellion, but I can't say as I was ever more surprised than I was jest now, when them six Injuns sneaked in here. We was playin' poker, with soldier-buttons in ther place of money, and the Injuns thought we had gold. They meant to clean us out; there ain't no doubt about that."

"Of course there is no doubt about that," the boy answered. "I heard and saw enough to convince me of that. The chances are that the red galoots would have killed you for spite, if they found that you did not have enough money to satisfy them. There are about a hundred Apaches around these diggings, somewhere. They have gathered together and quit the reservation, thinking they will have a chance in fighting the palefaces they meet, and thus bring back the old times they love to talk about so well. I suppose these fellows here belong to the bunch."

"A hundred of 'em!" gasped Billy Owens, looking at his three companions, with a very pale face. "An' we've come out here ter prospect fur gold!"

"Oh! don't worry about that," spoke up the tall man, who had followed the boy into the shanty. "A hundred Injuns ain't so very much when it comes ter fightin' at long range. I reckon our party could clean up that many in a couple of days, all right."

The four old soldiers looked at the speaker with admiration.

He was as straight as an arrow, with not an ounce of superfluous flesh on him, and his long dark hair and mustache, together with his tanned face, showed plainly that he was a genuine Westener, who spent the greater portion of his time in the open air of the mountains and plains.

But if they thought there was anything striking about the man, what must they have thought of the boy?

Of medium height, with the form of a perfect athlete, handsome in face, as well as figure, and with a wealth of light chestnut hair hanging below his shoulders, he was surely the ideal boy hero of the Wild West.

The coolness he had displayed in stopping the redskins from their foul work had taken the breath away from their intended victims, almost, and though they had hardly taken time to size him up, they knew that they had a real champion before the tall man appeared.

As the latter ceased speaking they turned their gaze upon the dashing-looking boy, who was standing in exactly the same spot he had halted in, the two revolvers still pointed at the Apache Indians.

"Charlie," said the boy, as coolly as though he was bossing a friendly game at a picnic, "just relieve the redskins of the weapons they have with them. They have on their war paint, and that means that they have declared war on all whites. The less weapons old Running Wolf and his braves have, the less damage they will do."

"Right yer are, Wild," was the reply, and he coolly started in to do as he was told.

"Ugh! No take gun; we no shoot deer and rabbit to eat," protested the chief, shaking his head.

"You shet up, or I'll undertake ter put an extra eye in your head with a bullet," retorted the tall man, as he pushed the muzzle of his revolver against the redskin's forehead.

Then he coolly took the weapons he had and passed them to Romer, who stood ready to receive them.

Not until the last one of them had been relieved of the weapons he had did the boy move from where he had been standing.

Then he lowered one of his revolvers and dropped the other into the holster at his side.

"Gentlemen," said he, addressing the four men, who had come so near to being cleaned out by the villainous Apaches, "you all look as though you are strong enough to do some kicking. Now then, I want you to kick these red galoots out of the shanty, one at a time!"

"Good enough!" exclaimed Kelly. "I kin kick 'em good an' hard, bedad! An' ther kick will come straight from ther heart, too!"

Without waiting a second, he seized the nearest redskin by the shoulders and headed him for the door.

Then he used his foot on him in a way that told how well he understood the business.

Out went the Apache, landing on his hands and knees.

Kelly's move was the signal for the rest to take part, and the way the four old soldiers went at the redskins was quite enough to make the most melancholy person in the world crack a smile.

The tall man fairly roared with delight. No doubt it tickled him greatly to see the "noble red men" get such treatment.

But when the last one was out he rushed after him, as did the dashing young fellow, who had been the master of ceremonies.

"Light out, you galoots!" the latter cried, loudly. "The next time I set eyes on you I am going to shoot. Go and tell old Running Wolf that Young Wild West sends his compliments to him, and advises him to lay down his arms and go back to the reservation. You hear what I say!"

Crack!

Just to keep them going, the tall man fired a shot in the darkness, just high enough to make it possible for the fleeing Indians to hear the hum of the bullet.

The four old soldiers, as they chose to call themselves, raised their voices in a cheer, and then they crowded around ther two strangers and gripped their hands.

"I'd like ter know who yer are, fur one," said Romer. "I've been around this world quite considerable, but I want ter tell yer, right to your face, that I never met a feller, young or old, what's half as cool as you are!"

"That's all right, my friend," was the smiling reply. "I'll tell you my name. I am known as Young Wild West, and as that is the only name I ever had, as far as I know, I reckon it's right."

"Young Wild West, ther Champion Deadshot of ther West, an' Prince of ther Saddle," spoke up Owens, nodding his head with great satisfaction. "I guess we've all read something about you, Young Wild West. But we certainly never thought we would meet you out here in Arizona."

"Well, I am in Arizozna about as much as I am in any place. There is no better part of the country to hunt up excitement and adventure, you know, and that is what we are after, the most of the time."

Owens was not long in introducing himself and his companions.

Then Young Wild West introduced his partner as Cheyenne Charlie, the well-known scout and Indian fighter.

There was more hand-shaking, and the four old soldiers showed their delight by giving three cheers again.

"This is the greatest thing yet," Romer declared, as he took a chew of tobacco and wiped his mouth with the sleeve of his coat. "Who would have thought that we was goin' to meet such great characters as Young Wild West? Where's your other pard, Mr. West?"

"Jim Dart is over in the camp with the girls and our Chinamen," was the reply, as the dashing young deadshot nodded off to the woods at the right. "I reckon they are all right, if there are no more redskins around. I don't think there are any more very close by, but the chances are that they will be around thick enough before morning. We heard that Chief Running Wolf was somewhere over this way, with about a hundred warriors, but we did not think that they were so close to Tucson as all this. But there is no telling what redskins will do, when they make up their minds that they are going to clean out all the palefaces in creation. They will take all kinds of chances, it seems."

"Do yer think it will be safe fur us ter stay here in this old shanty?" asked Romer, showing how uneasy he felt.

"No, I do not. You had better gather up your belongings and go with us. We have got quite a snug camp—fully as good as this shanty, I think. Just get a move on you, and we'll get away from here. It has stopped raining for a while, so you won't get wet."

"That's right. Well, we'll be right with you, an' thank you fur ther invitation."

It did not take the four men long to get their burros and load them up with the outfit they had purchased in Tucson.

Then they led the animals along, following Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie through the dripping woods.

When they had covered about a quarter of a mile Young Wild West called a halt.

Then he gave a good imitation of the hoot of an owl twice in succession.

The signal was answered immediately, and without any further hesitation, he started ahead, bidding his companions to follow.

The next minute the camp was reached.

CHAPTER III.

AT THE CAMP OF YOUNG WILD WEST.

"Did you find the redskins, Wild?" asked a girlish voice, as Young Wild West came down a rather steep bank to the camp that was located under a projecting cliff, followed by Cheyenne Charlie and the four men.

"Yes, Et," was the reply. "We found them all right. We were just in time, too, for they were in the act of committing a robbery. Here are four men, who will remain with us a while, I reckon."

It was Arietta Murdock, the charming, golden-haired sweetheart of Young Wild West. She stood in the light of the fire that was burning in the hollow, under the cliff, and the ex-soldiers could see her plainly.

They all took note of the fact that she was very beautiful, though hardly more than a child.

Arietta had been born and reared in Wyoming during the times when the lives of the settlers there were in almost constant jeopardy from the Indians and lawless white men.

She could shoot as well as the average man of the West, and at managing a broncho she had no equal for one of her sex.

Added to this, she was cool in times of danger, a quality that she had learned from her dashing young lover, and could always be depended upon to take her own part, and to help in a fight.

The other two girls of the party were Anna, the wife of Cheyenne Charlie, and Eloise Gardner, the sweetheart of Jim Dart.

Arietta and Eloise were the only real "girls" of the party, of course, but Anna was but a young woman, and Wild and his partners invariably spoke of them as the "girls."

It will be necessary to mention the two Chinamen our hero and his friends kept in their employ, since one of them was really a great character.

This one was Hap Wah, a very clever sleight of hand performer, card sharp and lover of practical joking.

The other was his brother, who was the cook, and a Chinaman, who had once flown pretty high as a sport, but had settled down to sleepy quietness.

Young Wild West lost no time in introducing the four men he and the scout had saved from the rascally Apaches, and it is not necessary to say that they got a warm welcome from Jim Dart and the girls.

They were ever ready to assist those in need, and it was a pleasure to them to be able to take the gold hunters in.

Cheyenne Charlie relieved Jim Dart from guard duty while Wild related just what had happened after he and the scout had located the lone cabin.

It happened that the redskin who had first made the discovery that the cabin was occupied, had given a signal to his companions, and it had been heard at the camp of our friends, who knew right away that it was a redskin call.

Wild and Charlie had started out right away, and after a while they had located the cabin, and then what has been recorded was enacted.

When Jim and the girls had heard all about it they showed how glad they were that the men had been saved from being robbed, and perhaps murdered by the Indians.

But, at the same time, they felt that they were in danger, since the fact that there were hostile Apaches about meant that they would surely find them.

But they knew that they were located in a pretty snug quarters, and if an attack was made upon them during the night they would stand a good show of withstanding it, providing the redskins were not in too large numbers. Wild now proceeded to arrange things so they would be better able to meet an attack.

He had not believed that Running Wolf and his braves were so close by, but now he felt that they could not be so very far away, and that the half a dozen that had visited the lone cabin had been sent out to scout along the trail.

The chances were that they had horses close by when they went into the cabin, and if they did not it showed that the camp of the Apaches must be all the nearer.

It had begun raining again, though not very hard.

However, it was quite enough to wet one to the skin if they remained out for any length of time.

The weather was warm, but the rain caused a dampness that made it decidedly disagreeable.

Besides the campfire there was a lantern burning, so there was ample light for them in the camp.

It was situated in a deep hollow that extended on to a ravine below the spot, so the water could run off as fast as it came down.

Rocks projected from the cliff on either side, and with the ledge overhanging it, they were safe from all points save that directly in front of the cliff.

But even then, they were lower down than the lay of the land near by, and there were rocks and boulders scattered about to afford them protection.

Dave Romer, as soon as they got settled down, related how they had amused themselves playing poker in the lone cabin, and they had one listener in particular, who was very much interested.

This was Hop Wah, the card sharp.

"You mustee havee nicee lillee time," he said to Billy Owens, as he edged up and sat down close to him.

"Well, it amused us, an' that's what we wanted, yer know," the old soldier replied.

"You callee um blass buttons allee samee tlenty dollee, so be?"

"Yes, an' ther Injuns was listenin', an' thought we had real money."

"Lat pletty goodee. But me no likee play pokee for blass buttons; me wantee play for um money, so be."

"Do you know how ter play poker?" Owens asked, looking at him in surprise.

"Me play allee samee lillee bit, so be."

"Oh! I didn't know heathens played ther game. It's only natural that men like us would play it. We've been through all kinds of things in our lives, an' we've had ter do somethin' ter pass away ther time."

"Me likee showee you nicee lille tlick with um cards, so be."

"Yer would, eh? Well, go ahead. I know ther boys would like ter see it. It'll sorter make us furgit our troubles."

Young Wild West overheard what was being said, and he did not try to stop the clever Chinaman from going ahead.

He knew that they were all in more or less danger, but that did not prevent them from having a little amusement, he believing that it would serve to lift the depressed spirits of all hands, if anything in that line existed.

Seeing that he had full permission to go ahead, Hop produced a pack of cards.

He sat down near the hanging lantern and motioned for the four guests to gather about him.

This they did, the rest remaining a little in the background, for they were so used to the tricks and doings of the Chinaman that he could hardly show them anything new.

Still, they had seen him perform many tricks that they could not account for, so they watched both Hop and the four men.

It was interesting to note the surprise of those not acquainted with the Chinaman's ways, anyhow.

Hop shuffled the deck of cards carefully and then invited them to each draw a card.

The old soldiers looked at each other and winked, for they had all seen card tricks performed, and they no doubt thought that this was going to be one of the kind they had seen lots of times before, and were capable of doing themselves.

But they did not know the sort of fellow they were dealing with when they had Hop Wah.

"You lookee at um cards. Len you puttee in um fire and allee samee burnee. Me takee outee um fire and makee allee light," the Chinaman said, blandly.

This surprised them.

They could not remember of having seen anything like that done before.

But they each drew a card, looked at it and then held it so no one could see what it was.

"You alle lemember whattee card you gottee?"

They declared that they did.

"Allee light. You no tellee each other whattee card you got; lat no fair."

"We won't tell," Owens assured him.

Then Hop reached over and took a burning stick from the fire.

He laid it on the ground before them and told them to burn up the cards, one at a time, and to leave the ashes there.

The four men were more than interested now, and Owens led off by setting fire to his card.

When it was nearly burned to ashes he let it drop to the ground, and it was quickly consumed by the flames.

Kelly, McGowan and Romer quickly followed suit, and no one knew what the cards were but themselves.

Hop removed the blazing stick and then carefully scraped the ashes in a heap.

Then he gave a nod of satisfaction and took from his pocket the big yellow handkerchief he always had with him.

"Evelbody watchee," he said.

They did watch him, and when he had covered the ashes with the handkerchief they wondered what was coming next.

After making a few mysterious motions over the handkerchief Hop removed it.

Four cards lay upon the ground, face down!

An exclamation of surprise went up simultaneously from the four.

Hop smiled serenely and handed each of them a card.

"Great scott!" exclaimed Owens. "That's ther same card I burned up, boys!"

"Mine, too!" came from the rest, as if in one voice.

Just then a volley of shots rang out, followed by a savage yell.

CHAPTER IV.

THE REPULSE OF THE APACHES.

The camp had been attacked by the Apaches!

The wonderful trick Hop had just performed was forgotten instantly.

A shower of bullets had passed over the heads of our friends, and they knew that they had a fight on hand.

But fortunately they were so situated that the bullets had gone high, and no damage had been done.

Jim Dart, who had been on the watch, heard a sound among the trees just before the volley was fired.

He had not had time to give warning, but he did manage to drop out of sight, however.

He was the first to answer the volley, for he saw the Indians as they came rushing from the cover the trees afforded, and while they were yelling like so many demons he opened fire on them with his Winchester.

Crang! crang! crang!

He fired three shots in rapid succession, and then Wild and Charlie joined in.

They had scarcely begun when the girls took a hand in the game, and the old soldiers, not knowing just what to do, crouched behind the rocks in dismay.

Fighting Indians was something they were not used to, and as it had been a good while since they had done any fighting at all, they were hardly prepared for it.

The yelling redskins fell back as the galling fire poured into their ranks.

As dark as it was, those in the camp could see their forms, and hence it was not a hard matter to make the shots tell.

"Take it easy, everybody!" called out Young Wild West. "They can't get to us, no matter if there is a hundred of them! We'll pile up the ground with their bodies, if they keep on coming. Make every shot tell. Girls, you are doing good."

When they heard this the four men, who had been given the shelter of the camp, got into action.

They began using their revolvers, though they could not tell whether they were hitting anything or not.

However, they were enough experienced to know how to shoot at an enemy in the dark, so it is more than likely that more than one of their bullets found its billet.

After the first rush the Apaches scattered and began coming again.

Many of them came up along the cliff, but the projecting rocks on either side of the camp protected its inmates, and when they got to them they were either forced to quit or come around.

None of them came all the way around, though a few of them tried it.

They went down like grass before the sickle!

For five minutes the shooting kept up, and then the attack was over for the time.

The redskins had met with dire defeat.

Cheyenne Charlie led in a cheer and the shouts echoed against the cliffs.

Young Wild West was well satisfied with the result, for no one in the camp had been hit.

A heavy smoke hung over the scene, for the moisture in the air kept it down.

Wild cautioned his partners to be on the watch, for it might be that some of the redskins would try and creep to the camp under cover of it.

If they did they would stand little show in a hand-to-hand fight, for not enough of them could possibly get there to put up an effective fight.

But they did not try to do it, for they had met with enough loss to satisfy them in that direction, just then, anyhow.

When an hour had passed, and they had heard nothing more of the Apaches, our hero concluded that they had gone back to the headquarters of Running Wolf to get a larger force, or that they had given it up for the night.

It had ceased raining again, and as the boy thought it over he decided that the best thing for him to do was to go out and endeavor to find out what the redskins were up to.

Waiting in suspense is not pleasant, and he wanted to get the minds of those in the camp at rest, if it could possibly be done.

"Charlie," said he to the scout, "I reckon we had better go and locate the place where the redskins are camped. I am satisfied that it can't be far away, for those who attacked us just now had no horses."

"That's right, Wild. They was on foot, I'm mighty sure," was the reply. "Let's go, by all means. I'm jest itchin' ter do somethin'."

Charlie was always ready to go on a dangerous errand with the young deadshot.,

Though a man of vast experience in that line, he did not regard himself as the equal of Wild, and he was proud to be called a partner of his.

The two quickly made known to the rest what they intended to do and there were no objections raised.

But the girls cautioned them to be very careful, as they always did on such occasions.

"That's all right," Wild answered. "I reckon we can fool all the Indians in creation on a dark night like this. Jim will take care of you while we are gone."

It usually fell to the lot of Dart to remain with the girls when it was necessary for two of them to leave, and he never grumbled about it, though his courage and willingness to go on any dangerous errand was unquestioned.

The two were not long in making their preparations to leave the camp.

When they left it was with the understanding that the usual signal would be given on their return, so no mistake could be made.

In woodcraft Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie were quite the equal of any Indian brave.

They moved off in the darkness, and from the very moment they went up the short ascent those at the camp heard not a sound from them.

By this time they had all recovered their composure, and as Hop came and sat down by the four gold hunters the wonderful trick he had performed for them came in their minds.

"How did yer do it, anyhow?" asked Dave Romer, as Hop made mention of it.

"Me do allee samee very muchee easy, so be," was the reply.

"It might have been easy ter you, but ter us it didn't look so."

When Hop said it was very easy he spoke the truth.

The pack of cards he had used was one that was made up entirely of tens of hearts.

Thus the cards that the four men had drawn from it were all the same, though they did not know it.

It was nothing for the clever Chinaman to slip four of the cards under the handkerchief as he covered the ashes with it, so when he gave them each a card, and they saw it was the same as the one they had drawn they thought it really was.

"I'd like ter see yer do it ag'in," said Owens. "A trick like that one is worth lookin' at."

"Me 'flaid to do um samee tlick," Hop declared. "Maybe um ledskins shootee some more if me do. Me showee anothee lillee tlick."

"That'll do just as well," spoke up Romer, who evidently thought there might be such a thing as another attack from the Indians if Hop tried the same trick, since it had occurred just as the climax was reached.

Hop brought out a pack of cards, but it was not the same one he had used.

This one was a regular poker deck.

He asked them to look it over and see if it was all right, and when they had obliged him, declaring that it was, he took the cards, shuffled them and then cut the ace of hearts, laying it on a rock before them, face up.

The card he cut did not belong to the pack, but there was no one who dreamed that it did not.

"Evelybody watchee um card, so be," said the clever Celestial.

But only the four men did, as Jim and the girls were keeping a watch, so they could not be surprised by the redskins, should they happen to creep up to make another attack.

Placing his thumb upon one end of the card, Hop held it firmly against the pack, which lay upon the flat surface of the rock, and then with his other hand he brushed it off, as though trying to wipe away a speck of dirt.

He raised both hands before the men to show them that he had nothing in them, and as they looked at the card they saw that it had changed to the ace of clubs!

Exclamations of surprise came to their lips, and they looked at the Chinaman in silence.

"Lat velly funny," said Hop, as he looked at the card, and then handed it to Owens for his inspection. "Me wantee blush um lillee dirt off lat me see on um card. Um ace of hearts allee samee turnee into um ace of clubs, so be."

"That's right," said Owens. "I'd like ter know how yer done it! It's ther greatest thing I ever seen."

Hop did not tell them that there had been a thin covering of tissue paper on the card, with the ace of hearts

printed on it, and that he had cleverly removed it when he brushed it.

If he had done that they would have considered it not such a wonderful trick, after all.

He showed them some more tricks, and then, just as he consented to repeat the first one, a startling thing happened.

A sharp cry sounded above them and then down came an Indian from the overhanging cliff, landing with a thud upon the ground within six feet of them!

CHAPTER V.

THE NIGHT PASSES QUIETLY.

Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie came in contact with more than one warm body as they moved away from the camp.

But they were well used to such business as that, and they had no feelings of regret for any of the redskins that had been killed.

The treacherous Apaches had brought it upon themselves, and it was purely a case of self defense.

The two made their way through the woods, going in a direction that they guessed might be the right one.

But they knew where the Indians had been when they heard the signal, before going to the lone cabin, and that was a small clue, anyhow.

Cheyenne Charlie had also taken note of the way they headed after the six were kicked out of the cabin, so it was only natural that they should head that way as near as they could in the darkness.

The rainy weather made it very dark, indeed, and they could not make anything like fast headway.

At length they found themselves ascending a hill, and when the top of it was reached Wild decided to climb a tree and look around for the campfire of the Apaches.

It might be within range of his vision and it might not, but there was a possibility that he might see it.

Wild selected a tree that was easy to climb and went up it swiftly and without any noise.

He reached the top and then took a careful survey of the surrounding country.

He was gratified to see half a dozen fires throwing out their light in what seemed to be a wide gully.

That it was the camp of the hostile redskins he had no doubt.

The young deadshot carefully measured the distance with his eye, and satisfying himself that it was not more than half a mile away, he descended the tree and joined the waiting scout.

"Did yer see anything, Wild?" was the question put to him as he dropped lightly to the ground.

"Yes, I found the camp, Charlie," was the reply.

"Good! Is it very far?"

"Not more than half a mile, at the most. It lies right over that way," and the boy pointed out the direction.

This conversation was carried on in whispers, as might be supposed. Our hero and the scout were not taking any chances, for it might be that there were spying redskins in the woods.

Charlie was eager to get to the spot where the Apaches were, so they proceeded on their way without further delay.

Used to walking through the forest in the darkness, the two did not lose their way and go in the wrong direction.

In a little while they came to an open spot, and then they moved with more caution than ever.

Up a slight ascent they went for perhaps three hundred yards, and then they came to more woods and scattered bushes.

Suddenly they came in sight of the camp.

It lay right below them, and it was remarkably quiet there.

But the Apaches had no squaws, papooses or dogs with them, and this was what made it quiet.

The two moved a little closer up, and then crouching in the bushes, they took in the scene.

Though they could not count the Indians accurately, they estimated that there was close to a hundred of them.

They had plenty of horses and seemed to be well supplied with tepees.

"Ther galoots must have planned ahead of time, or they couldn't have brought sich an outfit with 'em," whispered the scout, his mouth close to our hero's ear.

"That's right," Wild answered. "They have plenty of guns and ammunition, too. They say that old Running Wolf is a very clever redskin. He has known pretty well what he was doing before starting on the warpath, you can bet!"

It did not take them long to notice that there were a few Indians in the camp, and then they knew that the party that attacked their camp had returned, without stopping to gather up the dead.

"Well, Charlie," whispered Wild, when he had satisfied himself that there was nothing to keep them there any longer, "I reckon we may as well go back. It doesn't look as though the redskins mean to bother us again right away. Probably they mean to wait till daylight, and then give it to us good and hard. The chances are that some of them are near our camp, keeping a watch, right now. But that is only to find out whether we move away under the cover of the darkness or not."

"That's right," nodded the scout. "We may as well go back. There don't seem ter be nothin' in particular goin' on here. I jest wish I could git a chance ter pick off ther old chief, though. That would sorter put the kybosh on ther red galoots, I reckon. He must be in his tepee, 'cause I don't see nothin' of him."

"That is probably where he is. But I don't think it right to shoot at him, even if you had the chance, Charlie. That is not a square way, you know."

"They fight that way, though, Wild."

"Yes, I know. But we are a little more human than they are."

"What's sauce fur ther goose is sauce fur ther gander, they say."

The scout had experienced so much of Indian warfare that he always believed in giving it to them the same way they dealt it out.

He always took the advice of the dashing young deadshot, however, so he did not insist of trying to get a shot at the chief.

They waited a minute or two longer, and then they left the spot, making their way back for the camp in as straight a line as it was possible to do in the darkness of the night.

Though they had been nearly dry when they set out, they were wet to the skin from coming in contact with the moistened bushes and boughs.

But they did not mind this, for a fire would dry their clothing, and they had plenty with them to wear while the process was under way.

They got to the camp without mishap, and when they arrived they were astonished to hear that an Indian had dropped from the cliff above without warning.

"He fell on his head and broke his neck, Wild," Jim Dart explained. "He must have been up there spying on us, the ledge hangs out so far. Most likely he tried to lean out and the dirt gave way and let him down. He dropped in a hurry, just as Hop was going to show the wonderful card trick again. Hop has given up the idea of trying that trick again, since both times he has been interrupted by Indians.

Though the dropping of the redskin in their midst had surprised the inmates of the camp greatly, they soon got over it when they heard nothing that would indicate that there were any more of them about.

Wild took a look at the victim of his own rashness and soon came to the conclusion that Jim was right when he said the neck had been broken by the fall.

"Well, it makes one less," he said, as he turned away. "We didn't do it, anyhow, so his blood is not on us."

Then he told them what he and the scout had seen at the main camp of the Apaches, and when he gave his opinion that they would not be bothered again that night the girls and the four gold seekers were much relieved.

A double watch was kept during the night, but Wild's opinion about the matter proved to be correct.

Nothing occurred to disturb them, though two or three times the imitation of the call of a night-bird sounded, without being answered.

Wild knew it was an Indian signalling, probably to the one who had tumbled from the cliff.

But after the two or three vain attempts to get a reply the calling Apache had given it up, and thus the night passed and daylight came.

It was not raining, but the sky was cloudy and threatening.

"This ain't very nice weather, I must say," remarked Dave Romer, as he watched the preparations for breakfast. "It's been bad weather ever since we've been out in this part of ther country."

"Well, it's what they call ther rainy season now," Cheyenne Charlie answered. "Though an awful lot of water don't fall in these here parts, at that. If yer go about fifty miles to ther southwest of here you'll find it dry as a bone at any time of ther year."

"There's where ther gold is s'posed to be, ain't it?" asked Owens, looking interested.

"Gold is liable ter be found anywhere in Arizona. But it's more likely that yer don't find it, I reckon. If everybody found gold what goes prospectin' fur it ther world would soon be so full of it that it wouldn't be worth no more than lead. Howsumever, you may be lucky enough to strike a lode. I hope yer are. But jest now it will pay yer better ter think about Injuns, instead of gold."

Jim Dart was at the top of the cliff taking a look around for signs of the Indians, and the scout was keeping an eye in that direction, so he would be able to see the least sign the boy gave.

Of course Jim was not exposing himself very much, for an Apache sharpshooter might pick him off if he did.

But the camp was so arranged that those in it could not be hit unless a volley was fired at very close quarters, and before that could be done the redskins must first expose themselves to the fire of our friends.

Wing, the cook, worked rapidly, all the while acting as though he expected a storm of bullets to interfere with him, while Hop was looking after the horses and acting as though there was no such a thing as danger.

It was not until the breakfast had been eaten that they saw anything of the Indians.

Then one of them suddenly came up on horseback, bearing a flag of truce.

"They want ter git ther bodies of ther braves what went under last night," said the scout, speaking to the four gold seekers.

CHAPTER VI.

ARIETTA'S DISCOVERY.

The approaching Apache evidently put great faith in the palefaces he was showing the flag of truce to, for he rode up boldly and did not halt until he was as close as fifty feet to the edge of the camp.

"Me want to talk to Young Wild West," he said.

"How did you know Young Wild West was here?" Wild asked, as he climbed up to the level and faced him.

"Running Wolf know when he heard his braves tell about the boy who came to the log cabin and made the six Apaches go away," was the reply. "Running Wolf know Young Wild West; he say Young Wild West heap much brave."

"Well, I am glad he thinks that. I am Young Wild West, so go ahead with your game, redskin."

"Injuns want to get their dead."

"All right; I reckon you can go ahead and get them. We won't bother you unless you bother us. If you happen to take a notion to play a trick on us you will have a few more dead to gather up, that's all."

"Young Wild West heap much shoot straight."

The Apache, who was a young brave, and appeared to be very active, strong and muscular, looked at the young hero with a glance that was akin to admiration.

"Yes, I can shoot pretty straight, redskin."

"Young Wild West shoot very quick, too."

"Yes, I can shoot quick; I won't deny that."

"Young Wild West no 'fraid; he does not fear anything."

"Well, you've got that about right, I reckon."

The Indian remained silent for a moment, and then he said:

"The Apaches will get the bodies of their dead."

"Go ahead."

"Wild stepped back into the hollow and the redskin rode back to the woods.

In a few minutes half a dozen of the braves came in view carrying litters.

They had left their arms behind them, which showed that they wanted to let those in the camp know that they meant to hold to the temporary peace treaty until they had accomplished what they had came to do, at least.

It did not take them long to complete the work, and then they retired from sight in the woods.

Wild was well satisfied that the whole band were there, and that meant that something was likely to happen before long.

But he was confident that even though there were a hundred of the savages eager to annihilate them, they could not drive them from their snug position.

"Boys," said he, addressing his two partners and the four gold seekers, "I reckon we're all right. We've got a good supply of provisions and ammunition, and there is plenty of water here. If we don't make the redskins sick before the day is over I'll miss my guess."

"Yer kin bet your life on that!" Cheyenne Charlie exclaimed, nodding his head and smiling in grim fashion.

The girls kept well back under the cliff, for they did not know at what moment the Indians might begin shooting from the tree-tops, and if they did that the bullets could reach them.

"If there was only a cave here we would be all right," remarked Arietta, as she examined the face of the cliff. "Then we could get in and defy the red demons. The rock is pretty well cracked here, and it looks as though a hole could easily be made by using a pick a little. Just for the fun of it, I am going to do a little digging, girls."

"It will amount to nothing if you do, Arietta," Eloise answered, shaking her head. "You don't think you can make a cave, do you?"

"Oh, no. That would take too long, even if the digging was easy. But if you notice, here are cracks that seem to run away back into the rock. Hop, just bring me a pick here, will you?"

"Fetchee allee samee velly muchee quickee, Missy Alietta," replied the Chinaman, who had just finished looking after the horses, and had nothing to do.

As soon as she got the pick in her hands Arietta went at work.

Though nothing but a child, really, she was strong and very muscular, for one of her sex.

She drove the pick in a crack hard, and it went in several inches and became wedged.

The girl tried to pull it out, but she could not budge it.

"Get hold of this pick with me, Anna," she said. "I am quite sure that I saw that piece of rock move then. Maybe we can pry it out."

The scout's wife was always ready to help at anything Arietta suggested, so she caught hold of the handle of the pick and put her strength upon it.

Suddenly a portion of rock that was much higher than their heads started to fall toward them, and as the pick came out they all jumped out of the way.

Crash! Thud!

A rock weighing at least a ton came out into the hollow, showing that it had been nearly ready to fall of its own accord, and all that was required was a little starting.

Young Wild West turned as the noise sounded.

He saw what had happened right away.

"Great scott!" he exclaimed. "What are you girls trying to do under there, make a cave?"

"That's what I started in to do, Wild," his sweetheart answered, coolly. "I think I have succeeded, too."

She was pointing into an opening in the cliff that extended as far as the darkness inside permitted them to see, and her face lighted up with triumph.

The dashing young deadshot was amazed.

"My!" he exclaimed. "If that rock had fallen upon any of you it would have been the last of you. What made you get at work there with the pick, Et?"

"I don't know, Wild. I noticed the cracks in the cliff, and I thought I would use the pick a little. I told Anna and Eloise how good it would be for us if there was only a cave here."

"Well, it looks as though you have found one, Et. A very little effort would dislodge another piece of the rock up there, and then a horse could be ridden in there without any trouble. Romer, suppose you and your pards get at work here and make this opening a little larger? There is no telling but that we may have to use it before we get out of the scrape we are in."

The remark was addressed to one of the four old soldiers, who had hurried to the spot to find out what had happened.

"Sartin, Young Wild West," he answered. "We're more than willin' ter do anything you say."

The others came up just then, and while Charlie and Jim were keeping a watch for the redskins Wild superintended the job of enlarging the opening.

The enlargement was made with little difficulty, since the cracks were many and ran clear through.

Chunks of stone were taken out, some of them weighing several hundred pounds.

But those working managed to force them to fall so they would not bar the entrance, but rather form a protection for it.

In half an hour the cave Arietta had spoken of, without thinking that there was one there, was ready for occupancy, should they care to use it.

Arietta lighted a lantern and started to explore it.

The lack of pent-up air there made her wonder about it.

"Wild," said she, as our hero followed her toward the rear of the cave, "I would not be surprised if there is an opening somewhere. The air here is altogether too pure to come from a sealed underground place."

"Maybe you're right, Et," was the reply. "Let's go ahead a little way. This is not a very wide place, but it seems to extend a good distance back."

Lantern in hand, the brave girl walked along at his side.

The cave narrowed down into the form of a tunnel-like passage when they had covered a hundred feet, and then,

as they came to a turn in it, they suddenly saw daylight ahead.

"There!" exclaimed Arietta, triumphantly; "what do you think of that, Wild?"

"An outlet, as sure as I live!" came the reply.

"Let us go and see where it will bring us to, Wild."

"Certainly, Et. I reckon we can fool the redskins now, for we can go on through and leave them watching the camp. The horses can be led in one at a time, you know."

"That's right. Hurrah, Wild! I am so glad I took the notion to use a pick on the face of the cliff."

"You are always performing some sort of wonder, Et. You are the luckiest girl alive, anyhow."

Arietta laughed.

She really felt proud of herself, for she knew that the discovery they had made was all through her.

The two walked on and soon came to the mouth of the natural underground passage.

It opened at the top of a slope that extended over a mile, and which was covered by patches of vegetation and rocky formations of all sorts of shapes.

"Come on back, Et," said Wild, after he had taken a good look. "I reckon there is no use in staying where we are and fighting Indians. We can go on about our business and get such a start on them that they won't be able to overtake us very soon."

"That's right, Wild."

They went back and quickly acquainted their companions of the discovery that had been made.

But before any questions could be asked by the delighted hearers a yell sounded from the woods, and then as many as fifty Apaches came running toward the camp.

CHAPTER VII.

WILD OBTAINS SOME VALUABLE INFORMATION.

"Now then," said Young Wild West, coolly turning to his companions, "we'll show them how easy we can drive them back. Take good aim, everybody and shoot to kill."

Crang!

His own Winchester spoke, and then the rifles of his partners and the girls began cracking away in rapid succession.

Crouching behind the rocks they could shoot up the slope with ease, and at the same time keep from being made targets of by the redskins.

Volley after volley was fired by the Apaches, but after the first volley from our friends they did not dash straight up to the camp, but turned to the left and swung around toward the woods again.

At least eight of them went to the ground to rise no more, so they surely had made out badly.

Not the least bit of a wound had been received by any of our friends, so it was no wonder that they were in a very cheerful frame of mind.

Yelling and firing an occasional shot, the redskins finally disappeared in the woods.

But Young Wild West knew that they were just about angered enough to do something rash, so he gave the word to get the horses into the passage.

The two Chinamen lost no time in starting in to do this, while the rest kept a watch on the woods.

One by one the horses were led into the passage, and then Wild gave the orders to take down the tents and pack up in a hurry.

Charlie and Jim assisted in this, while the old soldiers took care of their burros, which had been taken through with the horses, of course.

In ten minutes' time a big change had been wrought in the hollow under the cliff.

Everything in the line of a camping outfit had disappeared.

Wild knew very well that the Apaches would not be so very long in finding out that they had left the place, and he wanted to fix things so they could get a good start on them.

There was only one way to do this and that was to send the girls and the gold hunters on ahead with the two Chinamen, while he and his partners remained, and fired an occasional shot.

They could easily overtake the party, even if they had as much as two hours start.

Wild consulted with Charlie and Jim and it was settled that this was the way they would do it.

There was not much of a risk to it, since they all firmly believed that all the hostile Indians were on that side of the cliff.

"Et," said Wild, after they had been told what they were to do, "I reckon you had better take charge of the party. When you get through the passage start for the southwest. The gentlemen, who have unexpectedly become our guests, want to find gold, and as we came out partly for that purpose, we'll head for a spot where it might be found."

"All right, Wild," answered Arietta. "I'll take charge, and I'll manage things pretty nearly right, too, I think."

There was no doubt but that the girl could do it, though the four men, who were to be under her command, probably thought that one of them should have been left in command, instead of a mere slip of a girl.

But whatever they thought about it, they made no objections to the arrangements, and when Arietta gave the word for them to come on through the passage they went as willingly as did the Chinamen.

"Keep right on as fast as you can," Wild said, as he gave his sweetheart final instructions. "We will come along and overtake you in the early afternoon, I reckon."

"All right," was the reply. "We will move along as fast as the pack-horses and burros can go."

The party had scarcely gone through the passage when Wild decided to try and draw the fire of the redskins.

He was anxious for a little more excitement, and by holding their attention close to the camp there might be no danger of the escaping party being discovered.

There were enough articles of discarded clothing there to make up a dummy, and Jim Dart undertook the job as soon as he found what the young deadshot wanted to do.

It was but a short time before it was rigged, and then

they consulted as to the best way to put it in view of the Indians.

Charlie cut a sapling and the dummy was tied to it.

Then, while Wild and Jim kept a watch on the woods, he began pushing it slowly upward along a slanting ascent among the rocks.

From the distance it no doubt looked like a man who was trying to work his way toward the top of the cliff.

Not until the scout had pushed the figure almost as far as he could reach with the pole did anything happen.

Then half a dozen shots sounded and the dummy was hit.

Charlie laughed and pulled it down quickly.

Crang!

Jim Dart fired just then, for he had caught sight of one of the braves at the edge of the woods.

His bullet went straight to the mark, for he saw the redskin drop.

"They think they got one of us, and I know I got one of them," was Dart's comment.

They waited a while and then the scout tried the dummy on the other side.

Again the fire of the Apaches was drawn, and again the dummy dropped.

But the villains were over-anxious and two or three of them unconsciously exposed themselves.

Wild and Jim each fired, and neither of them missed, either.

Charlie again tried to work the dummy on them, but this time no shots were fired.

"I reckon they've tumbled to ther trick, boys," he said, shaking his head. "Well, jest ter show 'em what fools they are, I'll shake ther blamed old dummy at 'em."

Then he pushed up the pole with the figure at the end of it and waved it back and forth, tantalizingly.

In spite of the fact that they must have known that they could do no harm to a stuffed figure, the redskins fired as many as a dozen shots at it, while it was being waved back and forth by the grinning scout.

It was fun for Charlie, for if there was anything he liked it was to get the best of Indians.

They certainly had the best of them now, and there was no mistaking it.

For the next two hours nothing was seen or heard of them.

"Charlie," said our hero, "I reckon I'll try and get over there and find out what they mean to do. The chances are that they will stay here and try to starve us out, of course. But it would be a good thing for us to know."

"Well, yer might be able ter git over there without bein' seen, Wild," was the reply. "Yer kin move down ther brook to ther pool below, an' then yer ought ter be able ter git around to ther woods. I reckon I could do it myself."

"That's right. There isn't the least bit of doubt that either of us could do it, Charlie. Well, I am going to try it. You stay right here with the horses. I won't be gone more than fifteen minutes, at the most."

"Go right ahead. I reckon everything will be all right."

Wild lost no time about it.

He knew that in the two hours they had had the rest of the party must be miles away, and out of all danger of the band of Indians.

The boy went just as Charlie said, and in a few minutes he had worked his way around among the trees, almost opposite to the camp under the cliff.

He moved ahead cautiously, and when he had covered a hundred yards he heard sounds that indicated that he was approaching the temporary camp of the Apaches.

He could hear the guttural voices of the braves, though could not understand what they were talking about.

There were too many of them talking for that, and their tones were rather low.

Wild took the risk of creeping up close to where the voices came from, and soon he was within fifty feet of the redskins.

He noticed that as many as half a dozen sentries were stationed about at the edge of the woods, but the main body of them was in a group.

Their horses were tied to trees near at hand, showing that they were ready to leave at any time.

No tepees had been set there, at all.

As this did not look as though they meant to stay there, Wild wondered what they were up to.

The young deadshot knew the language of the Sioux Indians very well, but he was not posted on the Apaches much.

However, he could understand considerable of it.

He listened and soon came to the conclusion that the band had left the reservation for another purpose than the killing of the palefaces they came across.

They were searching for a spot that was called the Valley of Gold, and which an Apache chief named Big Broncho knew about.

Finally two or three of the younger braves began talking together in English, and then it was that Wild got a pretty good idea of what they were up to.

It appeared that Big Broncho, the Apache who knew the way to the Valley of Gold, had refused to give the information to Running Wolf, and that he was being searched for by the band.

While looking for him they had come across the palefaces, and not being able to resist the temptation they had attacked them. But they were now ready to leave them and pursue the search for the Indian, who held the secret of the Valley of Gold.

When our hero had learned all this he was ready to go back to the scout, and then ride on through the passage and overtake the rest of the party as soon as possible.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE APACHES ARE LEFT BEHIND.

Wild lost no time in getting back to Charlie.

"How did yer make out?" came the query, when the scout saw him come up the hill under the cliff.

"Fine!" was the reply. "I found out that the redskins are not going to bother us any more for the present."

"What!"

Charlie was amazed to hear this, he knowing the disposition of redskins so well.

"They are hunting for a place called the Valley of Gold, and they simply tackled us as a side issue. There is some Apache chief around these diggings, who knows the way to the Valley of Gold, and has refused to let them have the information. His name is Big Broncho, and they want to find him badly. Now then, it is for us to find him before they do, Charlie."

"Valley of Gold, eh? Well, that sounds putty good. Must be some place where ther Aztecs used ter live, most likely."

"Probably. But it seems funny that an Apache could hold the secret, and not go and look for the gold that is supposed to be there."

"Maybe there ain't no gold there, Wild. It might be jest a place what ther Injun thinks is sacred ground. There is sich places here in Arizona, yer know."

"Yes, I know that. But the fact that it is called the Valley of Gold makes it sound as though there was gold there. Now we'll light out right away, I guess. But before we go we'll kindle a fire, and make the red galoots think we are cooking dinner. Lend a hand, Charlie, and we'll soon be ready to leave."

There was enough wood right there, which had been gathered the night before by the Chinamen, to make a fire that would last all day long.

Charlie soon had a blaze going, and waiting until it had gained sufficient headway, he put on some thick pieces, so it would last for at least an hour.

Then they were ready to go.

Their horses were in the cave, waiting for them, and after giving them a drink they led them through the passage and mounted.

"Now, I reckon we'll find out something about this Valley of Gold the Apaches are so anxious to find," said Young Wild West.

"An' if there's any gold there yer kin bet we'll git it, Wild," was Charlie's retort.

"It may be that we will be able to put the four gold hunters in a way to get rich quick," our hero observed, a smile playing about his lips. "They came to Arizona for the purpose of getting rich, so they say; though just about now I reckon they would rather be home in the East. Fighting Indians does not appeal to them, even though they are veterans of the Civil War."

"No; they've had their day at ther fightin' game. Most likely, though, they all give good accounts of themselves when they was in ther army. Fightin' in ther army, with smoke so thick that yer can't see what you're shootin' at, ain't exactly like fightin' treacherous redskins, Wild."

"No; that's right, Charlie."

Having no trouble to follow the trail of those who had preceded them, the two rode at a gallop and gradually their old camping place was left behind.

Wild doubted that the Apaches would make the discovery that they had left the hollow under the cliff, but whether they did or not made little differenec to him.

Arietta and the rest had left just about two hours and a half ahead of them, and Wild figured that they ought to ride twice as fast as they could go with the pack-horses and burros, which meant that they should overtake them by noon, or shortly after, anyhow.

Our hero's sorrel stallion, Spitfire, could cover the ground at a speed that was marvellous, and he was one of the untiring kind of horses.

Charlie's broncho was as good as could be bought in the West, too, and though he was not equal to the sorrel, he was a horse anyone might be proud to own.

Thus equipped, they were in a fair way of getting up with the others in due time.

It had not rained any all the morning, but the sky was still cloudy and threatening.

"We'll soon be outside the rain belt, Charlie," said our hero, as he looked off to the southwest and noted some streaks of blue in the sky. "We are getting closer to the desert all the time. I suppose the Valley of Gold must be located somewhere in the desert, where there is nothing growing but the prickly cactus bushes."

"Most likely, Wild," was the scout's reply. "Well, it's a good thing that they stocked up with water afore they started. Ther time will come, most likely, that water will be at what yer call a premium."

"It will, if we keep on to the southwest, that's certain. I know what kind of a country it is off there."

"So do I."

They rode, seeing no signs of any Indians, and just about twelve o'clock they reached an open stretch that lay off to the left for miles.

Vegetation had been growing scarcer all the time, and as they halted and looked over the stretch ahead they suddenly saw those they were looking for.

The party was about three miles ahead, and they came to a halt while Wild and Charlie were looking at them.

"I reckon it's all right, Wild," observed the scout, as he took a bite from a plug of tobacco to stay the gnawings of hunger. "There they are, an' it won't be long now afore we have our dinner."

Wild nodded, and then they set out at a sharp gallop.

They had to take a hollow a minute or two later, and then their friends were shut from view.

Not until they were within half a mile of them did they again come in sight of them, and then, at the same time, they were seen by those waiting.

Hats were waved to them, and they answered in the same way.

Two minutes later they rode up and received a royal welcome.

"I don't see no Injuns after yer, so yer must have fooled 'em," remarked Billy Owens, as he grasped the hand of our hero and shook it warmly.

"Yes, we fooled them all right," was the reply. "But I wouldn't be surprised if they come this way, though."

Then the young deadshot went to his sweetheart and congratulated her for getting so far away from the dangerous point in such a short time.

"Well, we covered a good thirty miles, I think," she said, with a smile. "I kept them going pretty good, I think."

"You must have, Et. Yes, you covered thirty miles all right. Well, that means that we are that far ahead of the Apaches, I think. But they have given up the idea of trying to get us, you know."

"What!"

Not only Arietta, but all the rest, were surprised to hear him say this.

Wild then related what he had heard while lying close to the band of Indians.

It was interesting news to them, especially the gold seekers.

"Valley of Gold, eh?" remarked Dave Romer. "S'pose we should find it, what then?"

"We'd be in wonderful good luck, bedad!" exclaimed Mike Kelly, his eyes snapping with the anticipation he felt.

"We'd strike it rich in a hurry," added Owens.

"An' that would give us ther chance of gittin' back home all ther quicker," said Martin McGowan.

"Yer don't seem ter like Arizona a whole lot," remarked Cheyenne Charlie, with a grin.

"We don't like hostile Injuns, anyhow," Owens replied, while his partners nodded to bear him out in the declaration.

"Well, how about the dinner?" Wild asked, as he turned to the fire that had been started to prepare the meal.

"Allee leady velly muchee soonee," answered Wing, the cook. "Me workee velly muchee fastee, Misler Wild."

"That's right. Charlie is as hungry as a bear."

"You allee samee hungly, too, Misler Wild," and the cook smiled, as though he knew just what he was talking about.

"Well, I am hungry. The ride we had made me feel like eating something good, and I reckon you've got it for us."

"Bakee potatee, corn muffin, bloiled partlidge, venison and velly, goodee coffee, Misler Wild."

"That is good enough for the president, I reckon. Hurry it along, you almond-eyed heathen!"

Wing did not object to being called names. He was so used to it, in fact, that he rather liked it.

It was the same way with Hop, as it is with almost any Chinaman.

The meal was soon ready for them, and then they lost no time in paying good attention to it.

But all the while they were keeping a lookout for some signs of the Apaches.

But none showed up, and when the meal was over Wild called a consultation with all hands, so they might decide upon which way to go.

They knew nothing, whatever, about the Valley of Gold the redskins were looking for, so they might take a course that would lead them away from it, instead of to it, providing, of course, that such a place really existed.

Finally it was decided that Wild and Jim would take a ride to a high eminence off to the left and take a look around at the surrounding country.

"Let me go with you, Wild," said Arietta, running to get her horse.

"All right," was the reply. "The rest will stay here till we come back."

The three were soon ascending a rocky grade that was entirely devoid of vegetation.

As they neared the top they heard a hissing noise, and instantly they came to a halt.

CHAPTER IX.

THE APACHE TOKEN.

"What's that noise, Wild?" asked Arietta, looking surprised when she heard the hissing sound.

"Sounds like a geyser, Et," was the reply. "There may be one close by. I've often struck them down here, though there are not as many of them as there are up north."

"Well, let's find out what it is," suggested Jim Dart. "I reckon it ain't no locomotive, 'cause there ain't no railroad track in sixty or eighty miles of here."

They rode on up, and as they rounded a turn they saw not only one geyser, but three or four of them in a little hollow below.

But that was not all!

Lying on the ground, probably a hundred feet from the nearest geyser, was a human being!

It was an Indian, as they could readily see, and as they looked at him they saw that he was alive.

Wild led the way down the little slope.

The redskin, who was evidently badly wounded, or sick, heard them coming, and he raised his head and turned his gaze toward them.

"What's the matter, Redskin?" Wild asked, as he brought his horse to a halt and dismounted.

"Big Broncho is going to the Happy Hunting Grounds, paleface boy," was the feeble reply. "He has been shot in the back by one of his own people, and he was left to die here."

"Ah! I see. Et, just give me your canteen. The poor fellow wants a drink; I can see that."

The Indian's face was haggard and worn, and as the young deadshot spoke his eyes kindled with a light of pleasure.

"The palefaces are good to Big Broncho," he said.

"Big Broncho, eh?"

Then it flashed upon our hero that Big Broncho was the name of the Apache Running Wolf and his braves were looking for.

"My name is Big Broncho, paleface boy," said the Indian, as he let Arietta place the canteen to his lips.

He swallowed a little of the water, and then he dropped his head back.

Our three friends could see that he was not long for this world.

Death was plainly stamped upon his face.

The ground on either side of him was soaked with his life blood.

"Who shot you, Big Broncho?" Wild asked, casting a glance at his companions, which meant that they were to say nothing about the Valley of Gold.

"Crooked Snake, the brother of Running Wolf," was the feeble reply. "He followed me many miles, because he knew I was on the trail to the Valley of Gold, where the forefathers of the Apache buried their treasures many years ago. Running Wolf sent his brother to follow me, so he could find where the treasures were, and then take them. But I would not tell him, and then he shot me again and left me for dead. But Big Broncho cannot

live now; he will die soon. The Apaches must not find the treasure. The palefaces who have given me water to cool my burning throat shall know the trail to the Valley of Gold. Listen, palefaces."

His voice was growing husky, so Wild again placed the canteen to his lips.

The few drops of water revived him, and after looking from one to another of the three, he continued:

"Go straight to the setting sun, for the trail leads straight; it is not crooked. It is eight hours from here, as the horse runs. You will find a big cavern, where all is dark. Look to the right and you will find torches. Light the torches and go through into the darkness of the cave. The trail runs through into the Valley of Gold. The Apaches must not touch the treasures of their forefathers, so the palefaces can take them. The palefaces would only come and get them some day, so the three palefaces who have given the dying red man water may get them now. There is gold and silver there! There is jewels there. The two boys and the girl have them!"

His eyes rolled in his head and he breathed short and quick.

Young Wild West knew that the end was near.

He held the canteen to the Indian's lips again, but he shook his head and motioned it away.

"Thank you, for telling us of the trail to the Valley of Gold, Big Broncho. I am Young Wild West, and I am sorry that you can't live and go with us."

"You Young Wild West, the great paleface brave?" came the query.

"Yes, that's who I am. This is Arietta, my sweetheart; and this is Jim Dart, one of my partners. We all thank you for what you have told us, Big Broncho."

The dying Apache tore loose his belt and held up something in his hand.

"The Token of the Apaches!" he said, feebly. "It will take the brave palefaces safely over the trail to the Valley of Gold! My tongue is not crooked, Young Wild West."

It was the last effort, for suddenly his arm dropped to his side and his head fell back.

The token, as he called it, fell at Arietta's feet, and when she saw that the Indian was dead she stooped and picked it up.

It was nothing more than a small oblong piece of buckskin with an Indian maiden's head and the setting sun worked upon it in wampum beads.

The work was cleverly executed, but as Indians are experts in that line there was nothing surprising in this.

"Well, the poor fellow has left this world, and if he is right in his belief, his soul is now in the Happy Hunting Grounds, where all Indians go when they die," said Wild. "What is the Apache Token, Et?"

The girl handed it to him.

"Rather a curious thing to be a token," Jim observed, as he leaned over our hero's shoulder and looked at the piece of buckskin. "A setting sun and the head of an Indian princess, I suppose the figures are meant for."

"Yes; that's just what they are meant for," Wild answered.

He turned it over and found that the other side was just about the same, the colored beads being sewed on both sides, and the figures showing out in bold relief.

Wild took the belt from the dead Indian and found that there was a pocket on the inside of it.

It was from this that Big Broncho had taken the token, as he called it.

"Well, I am glad we came out to take a look around the country," Wild said, after a pause. "We have found out a whole lot, I think. A dying redskin won't tell a lie, especially when he is talking to someone who has done him a kindness. Do you remember what he said, Et?"

"Yes, Wild," was the quick reply. "He said we should go straight to the setting sun, which means due west; and that it would take us eight hours to get there on horseback. Then we would find a big cavern that was very dark. Inside the cavern, on the right, we would find torches, and we should light one of them and proceed through the cave in the darkness, and then we would reach the Valley of Gold."

"That is just about what he said," spoke up Dart. "I listened to every word, and that is the complete directions."

"That's right," our hero nodded. "In this Valley of Gold we will find gold, silver and jewels, which, according to what he said, must have been buried there by Indians many years ago. And the Apache Token he gave us will take us safely over the trail. Well, I wonder what the old soldiers will say when they hear about this?"

"They will be surprised, no doubt," Arietta answered.

"But they will not be entitled to the treasure, or any part of it, if we find it," Jim said. "Of course we will share with them, but they must be made to understand that it is through the generosity of us three that they get any of it."

"Yes, that is right. Big Broncho gave us the treasure of the Valley of Gold, and I suppose he had the right to give it to us. It is hardly likely that anyone else living knows the trail to the place. So Running Wolf sent his brother, Crooked Snake, ahead to find Big Broncho, did he? Well, he found him; and he fixed him, too. The scoundrel could not have known of the existence of the Apache Token, or he would have made a search of the body after he thought he had killed him."

"He has done it while in anger," spoke up Arietta. "And when he reports to the chief—if he tells just what he has done—he will no doubt be lectured for it."

"He may get shot for it," Jim added, with a shrug of his shoulder. "I don't know but that I would take a shot at him myself, if I happened to get the chance. The fellow who just died was no doubt a pretty good sort of a redskin, and to be shot from behind by a treacherous galoot is enough to make one feel like taking revenge."

"Well, the chances are that the murderer is making tracks for the band of redskins as fast as he can go, so it is not likely that you will get a shot at him very soon, Jim," our hero observed. "Now we'll go up there and take a look around, and then we'll go back to the camp, and send Hop and one of the old soldiers here to bury the body of Big Broncho. I mean if we see nothing of the redskins coming."

They led their horses to the highest point above the

geysers, and when they had looked over the desert waste, and nothing was to be seen of any Indians, or anything else living, they mounted and rode back to the camp.

The story was soon told and the Apache Token shown.

"Great gimlets!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie. "I reckon we're on ther way to ther Valley of Gold, fur fair, now!"

"That's right, Charlie," Wild answered, while the four old soldiers nodded their heads to show the pleasure they felt.

Wild selected Dave Romer to go with Hop to bury the dead Apache, and they promptly set out, each with a shovel.

They had not been gone more than ten minutes when a shot sounded, followed by a yell for help from the Chinaman.

CHAPTER X.

THE MURDER OF BIG BRONCHO IS AVENGED.

Hop and Romer reached the spot where the body lay in less than five minutes.

They paused long enough to take in their surroundings and look at the spouting hot water near at hand, and then started in to dig a hole in the sand.

"A mighty queer proceedin', I must say," observed Dave Romer, as he made the sand fly. "I never thought we was goin' ter run ag'in sich a queer adventure as this when I sot out ter come ter Arizona. It sounds more like a story book than anything else."

"Velly muchee likee um stoly bookee," Hop answered, though he had never read one in his life. "Velly stlange, Misler Lomer."

"Do yer s'pose we'll find a lot of gold, Hop?" queried the gold hunter, as he paused in his work.

"More lan um million dollee, so be," was the reply.

"Gee whizz! do yer think so?"

"Me tlinkee so, Misler Lomer. Plenty gold in Alizona, so be."

They nearly had the shallow grave dug when Hop happened to look toward the geysers.

A sharp cry of warning left his lips and he dropped his shovel.

An Indian was striding rapidly toward them, less than fifty feet from the spot they were digging at!

Dave Romer quickly drew his revolver, though the Indian made out that he was friendly.

"Whattee wantee?" demanded Hop, putting on a bold front and feeling in his pocket for a cigar to give the redskin.

"Ugh!" was the reply. "What palefaces do here?"

"We're going' ter bury this body," answered Romer, keeping his revolver pointed at the redskin as he kept on approaching them. "Say! it wasn't you what killed ther feller, was it?"

There was a quick shake of the head in the negative.

Then the Indian stepped up and surveyed the silent form on the ground.

"Where belt go?" he asked, pointing to the body.

"Me no knowee," Hop answered, before Romer could speak. "We findee um dead Injun, and we allee samee buly, so be."

"Chinee has a crooked tongue; he has taken the belt of Big Broncho."

The redskin's eyes flashed as he spoke.

Then from behind him he suddenly brought a noosed rope, and with a quick move he flung it over the heads of the two.

Crack!

Romer pulled the trigger of his revolver, but the bullet went over the head of the Apache, and the next moment he was rolling on the ground, strangling from the rope, which had suddenly tightened about his neck.

But it had caught Hop a little lower, and as he went to the ground he let out a shrill cry for help.

The Indian kicked the weapon from the old soldier's hand, and then pulling a six-shooter from his belt, pointed it at them and exclaimed:

"Shut up! Me shoot palefaces if they make more noise. Come with Crooked Snake!"

Having nothing to defend himself with, and being much frightened, Romer gave in.

Hop made out that he was much frightened, too, but that was only his way.

He was simply studying a way to get the best of the redskin, and he was going to come pretty near doing it, too.

Already he had worked his arms clear of the rope.

Romer was holding on the rope to ease it from his neck as he was held close to Hop's breast.

But the Indian had the revolver pointed full at his breast, and knowing this, Hop did not cut the rope, which he could have done easily.

He was satisfied that the villainous redskin would shoot if he did.

But Hop was quite sure that his friends had heard the shot, for it was but a short distance to the spot where they were resting.

Crooked Snake, as he called himself, now proceeded to pull the two toward the nearest geyser.

Romer thought sure that they were to be thrown into the scalding water.

The steam that came from it told how hot it must be.

But Crooked Snake turned and dragged them behind a little hillock, and then they saw a narrow passage before them.

"Come on," said the redskin, threateningly.

Into the passage they went, and a few yards and they were into an open space, where two horses were standing.

The horses were Crooked Snake's and the one that had belonged to Big Broncho.

Right here we may as well explain that after shooting the Apache, who knew the way to the Valley of Gold, and leaving him for dead, his murderer had set out to join the band of Apaches to which he belonged.

But after riding a few miles it occurred to him that he had not made a search of the body, so he turned and rode back.

This took him the best part of an hour, and when he dismounted and walked through the short passage he saw a white man and a Chinaman digging a grave to bury his victim.

Then it was that he had approached them, as has been said.

Crooked Snake was a keen enough observer to know that he need fear little from the two he saw, and he easily caught them.

He had simply taken them through the passage so he might search them, and be out of view of their companions, should they have any, that might be attracted to the spot by the shot that had been fired.

He now removed the rope from them, and as he did so Hop looked at him and said:

"You allee samee velly nicee Injun, so be. You no hurtee poor Chinee."

"Ugh!" grunted Crooked Snake. "Where Injun's belt?"

"Me no knowee."

"Where Injun's belt?"

This time the question was put to Romer.

"Young Wild West took it to ther camp," answered the frightened man, thinking it best to tell the truth about it.

Crooked Snake gave a start.

It was evident that he had heard the name of Young Wild West before.

"Where Young Wild West?" he demanded, fingering the trigger of his revolver.

"Here I am, you sneaking coyote!"

As the words rang out Wild appeared on the scene, followed by Charlie and Jim.

The three had not been long in getting to the spot after hearing the report of the revolver and Hop's shout for help.

"Hold up your hands!" the dashing young deadshot added, as he covered the surprised redskin. "I feel just like putting a hole through your carcass!"

But instead of obeying the command, Crooked Snake made a leap for one of the horses, which were within a few feet of him at the time.

Dave Romer then tried to show how brave he was, and he ran after him, thus really giving him a chance to get the horse.

The Indian swung himself on the animal's back, remaining close down on the opposite side, and away he went around a turn in the rocky cliff that happened to be there.

Wild could have easily shot the horse, or possibly the rider; but he did not fire, thinking that the redskin would not be able to get out of range of his rifle.

He ran around the sharp turn, and though he could hear the clatter of the horse's hoofs, he could not see the escaping Indian.

Cheyenne Charlie quickly made his way to the top of the cliff.

He had his rifle with him, and there was a grim smile playing about his lips.

"I'll git ther measly coyote!" he called out.

"That's right!" Dave Romer shouted. "He's ther one what killed ther other Injun. He said he was Crooked Snake."

"That settles his hash, then."

Charlie got to the top of a flat rock and then he placed his left foot on an elevation and waited.

Like Wild, he could hear the clatter of the hoofs of the redskin's horse.

It was not more than ten seconds after he got to the rock when the murderer of Big Broncho appeared before him.

He was riding hard over the back trail, and was bending low over his horse's neck.

Cheyenne Charlie coolly brought his rifle to his shoulder.

To his mind what he was going to do was nothing more than if he had raised his rifle to shoot a wolf that was pursuing a frightened lamb.

He took a quick aim and pulled the trigger.

Crang!

The sharp report rang out and the redskin threw up his arms and fell from the back of the galloping horse.

"That galoot won't never shoot anyone else in ther back, blame him!" muttered the scout, as he turned and started down the rocks.

"Did yer git him?" Romer asked.

"I reckon I did," was the reply.

"Good! I'm mighty glad. I thought I was a goner when he was draggin' me along with the rope around my neck."

"Well, he won't do nothin' more like that."

Wild was satisfied with the way it had turned out.

The Indian was certainly deserving of such a fate, though as far as he was concerned, he would not have shot him while he was riding away.

He might have dropped the horse in order to get him, but that was as far as he would have cared to go in that line.

Feeling sure that there were no more redskins about, he led the way through the passage to the unfinished grave that Hop and Romer had been digging.

It was soon finished, and the body of Big Broncho buried, and then they returned to the camp.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE TRAIL TO THE VALLEY OF GOLD.

Once back at the spot where the rest were anxiously waiting for them, Wild gave the word to take the trail for the Valley of Gold.

There really was no trail to be seen just there, but the sun was trying to break through the clouds almost above them, and there was a good compass in the party.

He laid a course due west, and as they rode away, Hop remarked:

"Me no wantee go diggee hole for um ledskin whattee Misler Charlie shootee."

"Let ther carrion birds pick his bone," the scout retorted. "I ain't one of ther kind ter leave a body unburied, but sich a galoot as he is deserves it."

"Well, the chances are that Running Wolf and his crowd will be along before many hours, and they will attend to the job," Wild answered.

The horse that had belonged to Big Broncho was with

them, for Hop had caught it when they started to come back to the camp.

Wild knew that an extra horse often came in handy, and hence he had allowed the Chinaman to do it.

They rode along for about three miles and then, all of a sudden, they came upon what seemed to be the fading evidences of a roadway.

It ran almost in a straight line in exactly the direction they wanted to go, and as they looked ahead they saw that it cut through a high ridge, just as though the route had been laid out by an engineer.

"This is ther trail to ther Valley of Gold, all right," Cheyenne Charlie observed, giving a satisfied nod of his head.

"I reckon it is," answered our hero. "It looks as though it is a regular trail, though it has not been used a great deal, not lately, anyhow."

"Well, that don't make no difference," the scout retorted. "Maybe it was a trail a hundred years ago. Ther Aztecs might have used it in them days. I heard a galoot what was s'posed ter be mighty smart on them things, say that there was real cities around these parts over two hundred years ago. I've seen sich things myself, an' so have you, Wild an' Jim."

"Oh, yes!" Jim said, nodding his approval to what the scout said. "Buried cities are common in Arizona and New Mexico. We needn't be surprised if we strike one, and that the streets are paved with gold."

Dart said this more for a joke than anything else, but the four gold hunters took it seriously.

They were getting so they would not be surprised at anything.

"Jest let us git in this Valley of Gold once!" Owens exclaimed. "We'll soon find out how much gold there is there."

"If it's called ther Valley of Gold there sartinly must be plenty of gold there," Dave Romer remarked.

"Bedad! I belave we'll find bushels of it," declared Mike Kelly.

"Tons of it, maybe," added Martin McGowan, who was bound to have his say, too.

They kept on the straight trail.

It was easy to do this, for though there were no hoof-prints or wheel ruts, there was something about it that suggested a roadway.

That there had been a roadway there once our hero was well satisfied.

But that might have been many generations before.

Anyhow, he felt that they were on the trail that led to the Valley of Gold, for he firmly believed that the dying Apache had told the truth.

What would be found after they got there was another thing.

The sun was shining brightly now, for they were out of the limits of the rain-bearing clouds, and as it gradually worked around to the west all hands could see that they were heading for the point it would be at when it set.

But before the sun did set Wild called a halt.

He considered that they had covered about enough distance for one day, knowing that they could not reach the cave that night, anyhow, unless they continued on after dark.

"Here is a grotto that will afford us good protection in case of an attack," he said, pointing out the spot. "I reckon we'll stop here and rest up till morning. We can be up and off at daylight, you know."

"That's what's ther matter!" exclaimed the scout, who was always ready to agree with anything Wild said. "I reckon ther most of us is a little tired, anyhow."

"Yes, it's been a putty tough old ride," Dave Romer spoke up. "I don't like ridin' much, anyhow. But it's a lot better than walkin', of course."

"I reckon you'd find that out if yer was ter try it," the scout retorted. "A burro is better than nothin', all right."

All hands were soon busy putting the camp in shape.

It had been a warm afternoon and they were glad to be able to settle down for a rest.

"Now, if the redskins don't come along before morning and get a hustle on us we ought to put in a good night of it," our hero observed, as he saw that the horses were provided for to the best of their ability. "One thing about it, we can hold them off here as well as we could in the place we left this morning. This is even a better place, in fact. It is something after the fashion of a big block house that has partly gone to decay."

"That's right, Wild," spoke up Arietta. "There are lots of places in these parts that look as though they had been buildings, but they are really nothing but natural formations, after all."

"Which goes to show that Nature was the first to fashion out such things, after all."

The cook soon got supper ready and then they ate it and prepared to take a good rest.

The sun went down and the stars soon came out.

There was not much in the way of a breeze blowing, but the air was far more cool than it had been during the day, and consequently they could enjoy such an evening.

With no insects to bother them, such as they found in the wooded districts, the desert-like place was an agreeable change.

But Wild did not believe that the valley they were trying to find was a desert.

He had an idea that it would prove to be a very fertile spot, since he took it for granted that it must have been inhabited at one time.

He gave his opinion about it as they sat talking after the evening meal and all hands agreed with him.

The old soldiers were the most interested of any of them.

They had never been in search of treasures before, much less found any, while our friends were used to that sort of thing.

"Me likee see you allee samee findee money in um place we go," Hop said, speaking to Romer.

"Money, eh? Well, I'll be satisfied ter git plain gold," was the reply.

"Me likee you havee plenty money, Misler Lomer."

"How is that, Hop?"

"Len me ply dlaw pokee with you, so be."

"Oh! I see. If I had plenty of money you would play

draw poker with me an' win it from me. That's what yer mean, don't yer?"

"Yes, lat light, Misler Lomer."

"Well, I reckon yer could do it without much trouble, fur anyone as kin handle cards like you kin sartinly ought ter play poker."

"Me no play for um blass buttons," and the clever Chinaman shook his head and smiled.

Hop was certainly feeling like doing something, and he could not think of what it should be.

If he played a joke on the old soldiers Wild would probably take him to task for it, and if he tried to have some fun with Charlie he would probably get the worst of it in the end.

But he decided to take his chances on Charlie, anyhow.

He looked over at him and found him cleaning his revolvers.

His pipe, which had gone out, lay on a rock within his reach.

Hop smiled when he saw the pipe.

Several times had he played the same trick that he was going to try now.

Motioning those who saw him to keep quiet, he began crawling up behind Charlie.

So nice did he do it that the worker went right on with the job he had started upon, never once looking around.

Hop reached out and got the pipe.

Then, sitting on the ground, right behind the scout, he quietly removed some of the tobacco from the pipe and then dropped in some powder.

This done the tobacco he had removed was placed on top, and then Hop stole away.

A few minutes later the scout reached over and got his pipe.

He struck a match and began puffing at it, while the rest in the camp waited to see what would happen.

Charlie had taken just about half a dozen puffs when the powder exploded.

He was so astonished that he fell over backward, and Hop Wah fairly shrieked with delight.

Of course everyone laughed.

They could not help it.

Even Anna joined in.

Angered at having been made the victim of the same old trick so many times, Charlie got up and made for the Chinaman, resolved upon giving him something he would be apt to remember.

But Wild interfered just then, saying:

"Wait till you get a chance to play one on him. That will be the best way, I think. There is no need of losing your temper and kicking him, Charlie."

"That's right, Wild."

He gave in right away.

But there is no doubt but that he meant to get even, just the same.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW CHARLIE GOT EVEN WITH HOP.

The night passed in stillness.

If the Indians were on the trail they had not come up with our friends yet and all hands felt not a little encouraged.

It was scarcely daylight when the cook began to get the breakfast ready.

There was no fuel to be had, so they made the best of a cold meal, washing it down with rather warm water from the water kegs.

"Never mind," said Young Wild West, as he noticed that the girls swallowed the food rather slowly. "I reckon we'll find all we want when we get to that valley. There'll be plenty of game to be shot, and wood to kindle a fire to cook it, too. There may be lots of gold there, but that won't burn; neither can it be used for food. I am going to be on the lookout for food, water and fuel."

"That's right, Wild," spoke up Dave Romer. "Wealth ain't much good if yer can't find nothin' ter buy. Let's make sure that we don't starve ter death, afore we think too much about ther treasures that's s'posed ter be in the Valley of Gold."

"That's quite a sensible thing fur you ter say, Dave," said Billy Owens. "I always thought you cared more fur riches than anything else."

"When I've got a full stomach, an' know where ther next meal is comin' from, I do," was the reply. "But things looks sorter doubtful jest now. S'pose there ain't no change in this country after we git so fur inter it that we can't git back in a hurry? Then we'll be in a mighty bad box, I reckon. Our water ain't goin' ter last so very long, yer know."

"Well, I hope it'll last till we git where there's more."

"Arizona ain't much of a place fur water, 'cordin' ter what they told us in Tucson. Yer ain't apt ter find water everywhere."

No one interfered with their conversation, and after a while they dropped it.

But it was evident that all four of the men were uneasy about what was before them.

Still, they would not have offered a suggestion to Young Wild West.

He had already done much for them, and they were going to stick to him now.

If they found everything they needed when they reached the valley they were heading for, everything would be all right; and if they did not they would have to suffer along with the rest, that was all.

By the time the sun came up our friends were a good three miles from the spot they had camped over night.

The sun shone full upon their backs as they rode along, and while it was yet cool Wild urged them to move as fast as possible.

But the burros would only go just so fast, and it was amusing to see the old soldiers try to get them on a run.

However, they covered the ground pretty fast, and when noon came they were only about ten miles from a high rocky ridge that looked like the wall of an immense fort.

"I reckon the valley lies the other side of that," said our hero, pointing it out. "Shall we keep right on, or stop here for a rest?"

"Keep right on!" came from the majority of the party.

"All right! Keep on it is, then. The sun is hot enough to almost blister a fellow, but I reckon we can stand it."

As far as Young Wild West and his friends were con-

cerned, they could stand it all right, since they were well used to the climate of the Southwest.

The four gold hunters, however, had lived where it was much cooler all their lives, and they were perspiring and puffing from the extreme heat.

But the desire to get to the Valley of Gold spurred them on, and they were willing to stand the hardships for a little while longer.

The horses and burros were pretty well played out, too, though they were not new to the climate or the land they were traveling over.

Ten miles through the scorching sun and burning alkali sand would have sufficed an ordinary person for one day, but that was about the distance that had to be covered yet before the high natural wall would be reached.

Hop and Wing were ordered to bring up the rear by Wild.

"Just hustle along the burros," he told them.

They knew what to do, and with whips in their hands, they made the long-eared animals keep up the pace.

Hop was bound to have some fun out of it, so after a while he made a crack with his whip and stung Dave Romer on the back of his neck.

"Gittee movee on you!" he called out. "You velly muchee lazy, so be!"

"What are yer doin'?" the old soldier demanded. "What did yer hit me with ther whip fur, you bias-eyed heathen?"

"Excusee me, Misler Lomer. Me mean um bullo, so be."

"Oh! yer did, eh? Well, be a little more careful ther next time, then."

"Allee light."

Then Hop made a crack at the burro Owens was riding and hit the rider on the shoulder smartly.

"Movee lillee faster, you lazy bullo!" he exclaimed, just as though no mistake had been made.

"Here!" cried Owens. "Quit that! Look out how yer strike out with that whip, will yer?"

"Me velly solly, Misler Owens," Hop declared; and then he swung the whip back and caught his brother across the cheek with the lash.

"Hip hi!" yelled Wing. "My blother allee samee too muchee smartee. Stoppee lat!"

Kelly and McGowan laughed heartily, for they easily understood that Hop was having fun with those he had hit with the whip, and that there was no such a thing as an accident about it.

Things soon got righted, however, and Hop was content to let it go as it was.

No doubt he was afraid of getting a mauling if he continued his joking with the whip.

But this sort of business served to make the journey easier, and every now and then Hop would start up a little row with Wing, so that the others might have a laugh.

Cheyenne Charlie had been taking it all in, and though it was hardly a good time to get square with the Chinaman for the trick he had played upon him the night before, he decided that it would help along, and keep the travelers in a good humor, if he did.

The scout had managed to steal a big home-made cracker from Hop while he slept, and he had been waiting ever since for a chance to give him a taste of his own medicine.

He thought it over, and then lighted his pipe, so he would have a quick means of touching the fuse of the firecracker.

This done he got out the cracker, and then, while in the act of brushing his hair back he purposely knocked off his sombrero.

He quickly swung around and called out for no one to ride over it, as it was a brand new one, and had cost eight dollars.

They all steered clear of the hat, as might be supposed.

Then Charlie rode back a couple of hundred feet, so he might get a good start and pick the hat up from the saddle.

It was an old stunt of his, and is very common with cowboys, but the four old soldiers looked on with great interest.

Charlie swooped down and cleverly picked up the hat.

He reined in his horse, placed the hat upon his head, and then he trotted slowly past the two Chinamen, keeping pretty close to Hop as he did so.

There were a couple of pails hanging to the back of the big saddle the Chinaman had, and into one of these the scout dropped the cracker, after first lighting the fuse.

He rode on and joined his wife, with whom he had been riding.

Just as he got there the cracker exploded.

Bang!

Hop's horse gave a leap in the air, and with a yell of alarm on his lips, the rider went flying over its head.

Then it was that the scout roared with laughter.

"I reckon that's where I git square on yer!" he shouted. "What do yer think about it, yer slant-eyed galoot? It's nice ter be blowed up, ain't it?"

Wing, showing his brotherly love, dismounted and assisted the scout's victim to rise to his feet.

Hop was meek; he had not a word to say, and when he had brushed the sand from his clothing he mounted and rode along with his head down.

"That's where I got square with him, an' with one of his own blamed old firecrackers, too," said the scout, grinning from ear to ear. "I reckon he'll learn ter let me be, maybe."

"Maybe," answered Anna, as though she much doubted it, for she knew that her husband was not to be compared to the clever Chinaman, when it came to practical joking.

The instance was talked about during the rest of the journey, and it was not until the high, irregular wall of white and gray rocks was within half a mile of them did the subject change.

"Now, we want to be on the lookout for the cave," said Young Wild West. "We will see who will spy it first. It may be right at hand when we get there, or it may be two or three miles to the right or left."

"I'll find it for you, Wild," replied Arietta. "I am going on ahead."

The girl did not wait a moment, but urging her horse forward at a gallop, sped over the burning sands like the wind.

Wild started after her, but the rest remained back to keep those, who were forced to proceed slowly, company.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VALLEY IS FOUND.

Arietta saw Wild coming behind her and she urged her horse to a faster gait.

He laughed when he saw this move, and thinking it best to let her get there ahead, and find the cave, if she could, he held the sorrel stallion back and allowed her to outdistance him.

The girl was not long in covering the intervening space, and as she rode up she noticed a jagged opening in the face of the cliff, a little to her left.

She turned and rode straight to it, halting before the mouth of a cave that was as dark as a pocket inside.

"Eureka!" exclaimed the girl, quickly dismounting; "I have found it!"

Leaving her horse standing, she darted into the cave and turned to the right.

She was looking for the torches the dying Apache had spoken of.

So eager was she to find them before Wild got there that she ran headlong through the darkness.

The next thing she knew she stepped upon naught but empty air, and then down she went like a catapult!

A shriek left the lips of Arietta when she felt herself going down and then her feet struck a slanting stretch of rock and her fall was checked.

"Wild! Wild!" she called out, as she tried to get hold of something to stay her progress.

But she slipped on down for many feet and finally brought up with a jar that nearly took the breath from her body.

For the full space of a minute she remained perfectly still, slowly gathering her wits.

Not being like the average girl, Arietta was not much frightened.

She knew very well that Wild was close enough to hear her cries, and that meant that it would not be very long before she was rescued from her position.

"Wild!" she cried, loudly. "Look out! Don't fall down here. I am in a deep crevice, or something. No bones broken. Be careful."

"All right, Et," came the answer from above. "By jove! So you are down in a hole, are you?"

"Yes, Wild," was the joyful reply. "Be careful that you don't fall down."

"Are you sure you are not hurt, Et?"

As the question was asked from above she looked up and saw the glimmer of a light.

"No, I am not hurt, Wild; only shaken up a bit, and perhaps a scratch or two. I am all right."

"Well, here comes a rope. I reckon it will reach you."

There was a rattling of dirt and pebbles and then a rope came down the chute-like place.

The brave girl quickly seized it, and placing the noose over her head and under her arms, called out:

"All right! Pull me up, Wild!"

Then the rope tightened and she was pulled slowly upward.

A cry of joy came from her lips as she finally reached the top and felt the hands of her dashing young lover grasp her by the arms.

Wild carried her bodily to the mouth of the cave, where it was light.

"Well, little one," he said, smiling at her, "I reckon you was a little too anxious that time. You found the cave all right. But you did not prove to be very cautious about entering it, did you?"

"I wanted to find the torches the dying Indian spoke of, Wild, so I would be ready for you when you got here," she answered.

"Well, never mind. So long as you are not hurt it is all right. This is the cave, no doubt; and now we will soon find out whether the Valley of Gold lies on the other side or not."

He led her outside and waited for the rest to come up.

There was but a short distance for them to come now, and in a couple of minutes Cheyenne Charlie and Anna halted at the mouth of the cave.

As they were dismounting the rest came up.

"Found it, eh?" said the scout, nodding his head, as he looked around him.

"Yes, and Arietta came mighty near going to her death," our hero answered.

"What!"

This was surprising to them all, for they had not been close enough to the cave to observe that there was anything wrong.

Arietta, who had regained her composure by this time, quickly related what had happened to her.

Anna and Eloise listened in amazement.

"You should not have rushed into the darkness like that," said the former.

"I know it," was the reply. "But I wanted to find the torches. Where are they, anyhow? Did you find them, Wild?"

"Not yet," he answered. "I haven't had time to look for torches, Et. It was you I wanted to find, after hearing your call for help. I thought at first that there were redskins here, and that they had got you."

All hands crowded into the cave now.

The wall was so thick that when they got inside they did not have to go many steps to get into total darkness.

"Oh!" exclaimed Dave Romer, clapping his hands with delight. "Now, if ther blamed Injuns don't bother us we'll be all right."

"But they'll be after us, no doubt," Jim Dart replied, quickly. "You must remember that they are looking for the Valley of Gold, too."

"That's so. I s'pose it'll jest be our luck not ter git out of ther place alive, after we find it."

"Don't look on ther dark side of it, Dave," spoke up Billy Owens. "If we've got ther best of ther redskins so far, I reckon we might do it right along."

"That's ther way ter talk!" the scout exclaimed. "Don't cry over trouble afore it comes. It's bad enough when yer git mixed right up in it an' don't know which way ter turn ter git out."

The girls assisted Arietta in straightening out her ruffled garments and then Wild suggested that a lantern be lighted.

This was done, and then he called his sweetheart and said:

"Now we'll look for the torches Big Broncho said were here. Not that we need them, because a lantern will do just as well; but just to see if he knew what he was talking about."

He led the way to the right, holding the lantern ahead, so they would not step into the hole that had come so near being Arietta's tomb, and they proceeded along."

But they kept close to the rocky wall, and the opening was passed.

It was a sort of well-like opening that the girl had walked into, and if she had gone a yard to either the right or left she would have escaped it.

Wild held the lantern up as a ledge was disclosed ahead of them, and then some long and short sticks were to be seen.

The young deadshot took one of them in his hand and found that it was a dry pine covered with a thick coat of resin.

"Here are the torches," he said, calmly. "Fetch a couple of them back here, boys. We'll take a look around to find out whether or not the Apaches are coming, and if they are not in sight we will follow the trail to the Valley of Gold."

The boy was no more excited than if they were simply on their way to a mining camp, and knew that a warm welcome awaited their coming.

Though the whole thing savored of mystery, Young Wild West was used to it, and very fond of it, too.

In a very few minutes they were ready to proceed, there being no signs of a pursuit from the hostile Apaches.

At the command of our hero the horses were led into the big cave.

Leading the way with a lantern, and Charlie carrying one of the blazing torches right behind him, the little procession started.

About a hundred yards was covered and then they came to a passage that was not more than wide enough to admit two horses abreast.

As they reached this Wild noticed a smooth flat surface of rock on which some characters had been cut.

He paused and held the lantern close to it.

Then he easily deciphered the characters that were on the Apache Token the dying Indian had given him.

There was the head of the Indian princess and the setting sun, just about in the same form as those on the piece of buckskin.

"I reckon there's no doubt about it now," he said, pointing to the slab. "Everybody take a look. It is the mark of the Apache Token, I reckon."

"It sartinly is," Cheyenne Charlie answered. "We're in luck, all right."

Elated at the success they had met with, so far, and forgetting the danger that Arietta had escaped from, they pushed on through the passage.

When they found that it led downward they all knew that they were nearing the valley.

Anyhow, the Indian had said that it was but a short distance from the dark cave to the valley.

For two hundred yards they continued to go on downward and then daylight showed ahead.

In less than a minute later they stepped out upon the edge of a beautiful and fertile little valley that was probably a hundred acres in extent.

Tropical trees, fruits and flowers showed on every hand, while the feathered songsters made the air ring with their cries.

"It don't look much like a valley of gold, but I reckon it's worth coming over the desert to find," said Young Wild West, as he removed his hat and wiped the perspiration from his brow.

Just then a dozen more Indians, who were clad in the finery of the ancient Aztecs, appeared before them, marching soldier-fashion and in absolute silence!

CHAPTER XIV.

SURPRISE UPON SURPRISE.

"Great gimlets!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie. "What in thunder does this mean?"

"It means that the valley is inhabited, I reckon," answered Young Wild West, coolly. "Just leave it to me. I'll try and fix things with these fellows."

A sudden thought had popped into the boy's head, and quickly producing the Apache Token, he stepped boldly toward the advancing Indians.

They looked at him with no little surprise, and when their leader brought them to a sudden halt our hero exclaimed:

"Good morning, gentlemen! I reckon we don't want to disturb you, but we found our way here, and hope it will be all right."

The leader, or chief, probably, answered in the language of the Apaches, declaring that he could not speak the tongue of the palefaces, and did not want to learn it.

Wild understood him all right, but without saying anything further, he held up the token.

Exclamations of surprise came from the Indians, and then their leader shook his head solemnly and stepped close to the boy.

He looked the token over in silence and then stepped back.

Then he said something to his followers and the result was that they quickly broke into a double line, standing about a dozen feet apart and forming a lane for our hero and his companions to go on through.

"Mount," said Wild, nodding to the rest. "I reckon it's all right. Don't get frightened, anybody. They won't harm us. The Apache Token is going to take us through, just as the dying Indian said it would."

The chief now motioned them to pass on into the valley.

"All right," Wild answered. "We'll go on through until we find a nice place to camp, and then we'll halt. A good drink of cool water wouldn't go bad now."

With Arietta riding at his side, the dashing young deadshot led the party between the lines of the Indians.

When the last of them had passed the redskins fell in behind them and marched along like drilled soldiers.

Wild was watching ahead, and when he came to a bubbling brook that trickled from a cracked rock on the side of a little hill, he called a halt.

"We'll take a rest right here for a while," he said. "I reckon they won't object to it."

The Indians halted when they did, and when they saw them unloading the pack-horses they looked at them curiously.

"Act just as though you don't fear them in the least," said our hero in an undertone. "This is a mighty strange adventure we are having, and the more cool we keep the better it will be, I think."

They all drank the water from the brook, and when they had relieved the horses and tied them where they could make the best of the luxuriant grass that grew in abundance in the little valley, they turned their attention to the fruit.

The Apaches, Aztecs, or whatever they could be called, watched them in silence for a while, and then at a command from the leader, they marched away.

The four old soldiers looked after them as though they were not satisfied that they were not dreaming, and when they had disappeared behind a clump of trees and bushes Dave Romer exclaimed:

"By ginger!" they put me in mind of ther pictures of ther Indians what was in Mexico when ther Spanish come over."

"They are dressed in the same kind of costumes, Mr. Romer," Wild answered. "It may be that they are a remnant of the race, or it may be that they are just plain Apaches living here because they don't want to mix up with the whites. I reckon we'll find out something about it before we leave here, though."

"Maybe they won't allow us ter leave," Owens said, shaking his head, to show how puzzled he was.

"We'll have to take the chances on that."

"Well, we're here, an' I reckon we may as well have a good time," spoke up the scout, as he munched some luscious grapes. "We ain't goin' ter starve here, an' that's one thing sartin."

"Unless they catch us an' stop us from eatin' anything," Owens added.

"Shet up your croakin'!" exclaimed McGowan. "Leave it ter Young Wild West an' his pards ter settle, Billy."

"All right. I won't say nothin' more."

After eating all the fruit they wanted Young Wild West and his friends rested under the shade of the trees.

Wild had not given orders to put up the tents, for he did not know whether they would stay there or not.

An hour passed and nothing was seen or heard of the Indians.

It was close to noon now, and notwithstanding the fact that they had all eaten liberally of the fruit, they felt the pangs of hunger.

As Charlie put it, the fruit had sharpened their appetites for something solid.

Just as they were thinking of kindling a fire two Indians appeared carrying a big chunk of beef.

They walked up to the strangers, and without a word deposited the meat on the grass.

"A whole loin of juicy beef," said Wild, nodding his approval. "I reckon some steaks won't be bad for dinner. Thank you, gents!"

He bowed to the two Indians, but they only stared at him, and turning, soon disappeared in the bushes.

"Start a fire going, Wing, and get busy with this meat," said our hero, coolly. "I reckon we've struck a mighty fine place. It beats anything I have ever seen in this part of the country, I am sure."

The cook needed no second bidding.

He was always ready to do what Young Wild West said, and though he no doubt felt that it was a rather strange situation to be in, he took it for granted that it was all right, and went about it just as though there was nothing mysterious about it.

It was not long before the odor of broiling meat and boiling coffee mingled with that of the sweet-smelling flowers and fruits of the valley.

There was such an air of peaceful content about the scene that it hardly seemed possible that they had crossed a desert, after fighting hostile Apaches, and reached such a place.

The girls were delighted, and as the strangeness of the situation gradually wore away they chatted gaily and picked the flowers that were so plentiful.

The noonday meal was cooked and eaten, and nothing more was seen of the Indians of the valley.

But Wild was not the one to remain there and wait to see what the natives were going to do.

He made up his mind to take a look around the valley.

It occurred to him that since the Indians appeared to be so friendly, it would be a good idea for just him and Arietta to go out on a tour of investigation.

When he told his thoughts to the rest no one raised the least objections, other than to state that they feared something might happen to the two.

"Come on, Et," said the boy. "We must find out what kind of a place this is. I can't wait any longer."

"And I am just as eager as you are, Wild," was the reply.

"Well, we'll go on horseback, then. That might please the redskins, for we don't make a bad appearance riding together, I've heard say."

He laughed as he said this, showing that he did not mean to insinuate that he was proud of his face and figure.

"I reckon you two would make a good impression anywhere you went," the scout declared. "Of course, Injuns ain't got much eyes fur good looks in palefaces, but these what's here 'pears ter be different from ther general run."

Laughingly the young deadshot and his sweetheart mounted their horses.

Then assuring their companions that they would not be gone very long, they took the course the Indians had taken when they disappeared from view and rode away, their horses at a trot.

They had not gone far when they came in sight of the ruins of an ancient temple, which could just be discerned in the growing vegetation.

As they rode up to it they could not help noticing a big stone slab that bore the same characters as were on the token.

This was the second time they had seen the inscription, and they wondered what it referred to, anyhow.

But there was no use in trying to figure it out just then.

Wild and Arietta rode on a little further, and coming to a field that was covered with growing vegetables such as were common to that climate, they saw several Indians at work.

Back of this lay the perpendicular cliffs that formed the inside wall of the valleys.

The cliff was full of openings, and rude ladders ran up to them in many instances.

"Cliff dwellers, by jingo!" exclaimed our hero. "Who would have thought we would have found anything like that, Et?"

"I am not surprised at anything, Wild," was the reply. "There is no telling what we may come across yet, and I am not going to be surprised."

As they neared the cliff heads could be seen popping out of the openings on every hand.

The population of the valley was certainly getting a surprise.

Not until they reached the foot of the cliff did Wild and his sweetheart come to a halt.

Then they coolly surveyed the curious scene.

Suddenly an Indian maiden, who, by her fancy attire, was evidently a princess, came from a clump of bushes behind them.

"What came you here for?" she called out, in good English.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PRINCESS OF THE VALLEY OF GOLD.

"That sounds something like it, Et!" said Wild to his sweetheart, and then bowing to the Indian maid, he answered:

"We came here because the Apache Token was given to us, and the way to get here told to us. Who are you, if I may be so bold as to ask?"

"Let me see the Apache Token," the girl said, ignoring his question, and walking boldly to them.

Wild quickly dismounted and showed it to her.

"It is well," she said. "The token is the work of my own hands. I, the Princess Pearl Face, made the token and gave it to my uncle, who chose to live among the whites, instead of here, the same as our ancient ancestors did. But how did you come in possession of the token, paleface boy and maiden?"

Wild soon related the whole story.

The girl listened in silence, and when he had done so she said:

"I believe you. Your face tells me that every word you say is true. But my uncle, who was called Big Broncho, must surely have been out of his mind, or he would never have told you what he did, and given you the Apache Token. The token was not for palefaces to have. It was never meant that they should come to the Valley of Gold."

"Well, he was so grateful to us for giving him water, when he was dying, that he wanted to reward us, I suppose," said Arietta.

"That is right," said the Princess Pearl Face. "But he should have told you that though white people have come here to the Valley of Gold, they have never left it!"

"I reckon they did not have a token, so they could have the privilege," Wild spoke up, in his cool and easy way.

The girl started and looked at him curiously.

"No," she said, "they did not have a token. But," and she shook her head in a solemn manner, "it is the law of the Apaches here, and the Cliff Dwellers, too, that when a paleface comes here he must stay until such time as comes for him to be offered as a sacrifice to the sun."

"We'll take our chances on that, won't we, Et?" asked Wild, turning lightly to his sweetheart.

"I guess so," was the reply. "The princess is no barbarian, as we can readily see."

She had not dismounted as yet, and as she finished speaking Arietta did so.

A troubled look came over the face of the princess.

"I have not all to say here in the Valley of Gold," she said, slowly. "While my word is law in many things, there are some things that I cannot control. But the token may be of great help to you, if you should want to ever leave here."

"We don't want to leave just yet, Princess Pearl Face," said Wild. "But let me introduce ourselves to you. I am Young Wild West, and this young lady is Arietta Murdock, my sweetheart."

The girl bowed.

"There are more of you," she ventured, looking in the direction of the camp.

"Yes, quite a lot of us. We'll take good care to behave ourselves, and not violate your ancient laws, while we are here. You can rest assured on that. You may need us, too, for if Chief Running Wolf and his big band of warriors should find their way here there would be some fighting to do, most likely."

"What is that?"

The girl asked the question as though it frightened her.

"Well, I didn't tell you that a chief named Running Wolf was on his way here, and that it was he who sent the man to find Big Broncho and make him tell the way to get here. But that is the case, princess. A hundred Apaches are on their way to the Valley of Gold. We got here ahead of them, and if they happen to find the way they will get here, too."

At this the girl clapped her hands sharply.

Men came running from all directions and down the ladders from the holes in the cliff.

At first Wild and Arietta thought they were going to be seized by them, but they soon found that the princess had called them for another purpose.

She spoke to them earnestly for a few minutes, and then they departed in a hurry.

But it was not long before they showed up again, armed with bows and arrows, clubs and spears.

Then they all started for the passage that led to the cave, about seventy of them, all told.

"They go to meet the Apaches," said the princess, in answer to Arietta's look of inquiry. "They will fix it so they cannot get into the cave."

"And that will fix it so we can't get out," Wild thought.

The Indian girl soon calmed down, and then she related a long story as to why it was that the Valley of Gold was inhabited by two sets of people, both of which were living up to the traditions of their ancestors.

The few who had founded the colony in the valley a few years before had simply gone back to the ways of their forefathers, and as some of them claimed to be the descendants of the Cliff Dwellers, they chose that way of living.

The others lived as nearly like the ancient Aztecs as they knew how, though all were Apaches, and chose to call themselves such.

But they were Apaches, who, feeling that it was better to be at peace with the whole world, chose to seclude themselves from it as much as possible.

Big Broncho was supposed to be the only Apache outside the valley who knew about the colony there, and now there were a hundred of them knowing about it, and trying to find their way there, so they might get the gold and jewels that was buried there.

Wild and Arietta listened to the story with no little interest.

When the princess paused after a while Arietta said:

"How is it that you speak such good English?"

"My father, who is now dead, got a white man, who was here a prisoner, to teach it to me when I was but a child. I have never forgotten it, Arietta."

"Well, you don't mean to remain here as long as you live, do you?"

"I don't know how I should be able to get away. They tell me there is a desert of death outside, and I could never hope to cross it."

"You could cross it easy enough if you went when we go."

A strange light showed in the dark eyes of the Apache princess.

"You have made me think as I have never thought before," she said.

"Well, maybe I have done you good, Pearl Face."

"Maybe you have, Arietta."

The princess then invited our two friends to go to her home, and they accepted the invitation.

The home was an adobe building situated among a lot of trees.

Near it was a big cavity in the earth, with caves running around the sides that were large enough to form living apartments for the families who preferred that way of living on account of their ancestors.

The adobe house was fitted up like a palace inside.

Gold and silver ornaments were as plentiful as furniture and cooking utensils.

"I reckon there is a fortune right here, Et," said Wild, smiling at his sweetheart and nodding to some of the treasures that were lying about so loosely.

"Yes," was the reply.

"We care nothing for them," said the princess, noticing how interested they were.

"Well, when you go away from here be sure that you take plenty of the treasures you have got with you," Arietta remarked.

"When I go away?"

"Yes."

"When will that be?"

"When we go."

The girl shook her head.

"I would like to see the world," she said. "But I am the Princess of the Valley of Gold."

"What makes you call it the Valley of Gold?" Wild queried, looking at her keenly.

"Because the Apaches who came here to settle in it gave that name for it. There is a gold mine here. All the gold there is to be found here is right in this building."

"Well, I can see quite a little."

"Yes, but you have not seen one-tenth of it. And the jewels! The Jewels of the Aztecs! They are fine."

"Show them to me."

Arietta asked the question eagerly.

"Yes, I will show them to you, Arietta."

Pearl Face left the room for a minute or two, and when she returned she carried a small wooden box with her.

Wild had taken a seat, and when the box was opened he arose again.

The princess opened it and the sight that lay before our hero and his sweetheart was a dazzling one, indeed.

As well as they could guess, there must have been a fortune right in the box, for the diamonds, rubies and other stones there certainly were very valuable.

While they were looking at them the voice of Hop was heard outside.

"Misler Wild! Comee allee samee quickee! Um biggee fight in um cave, so be! Ledskins comee likee blazee!"

"Running Wolf has got to the cave and is fighting with your warriors, Princess Pearl Face," said Wild, turning to the startled girl. "I reckon you won't stand the least show, because bows and arrows are no good against guns. The Apaches have got guns and pistols, and they know how to shoot."

"What shall I do?" she cried, holding up her hands as though in agony.

"Come with us," said Arietta.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

Wild ran outside and found Hop there.

"How did you find out where we were, Hop?" he asked.

"Me takee lillee walkee 'lound, and me soon see you talkee with um plincess," was the reply.

Just then our hero heard a volley of shots.

Pearl Face heard the shots, too.

"The Apaches from the outside world have come to ruin the Valley of Gold!" she exclaimed. "Save me, Arietta!"

Wild had been doing some quick thinking.

He knew that if Running Wolf once got in the valley with his braves it would be no place for them.

He decided to get out as soon as possible, and to take all the gold and jewels they could with them.

"Hop," said he, "run back to the camp and tell them all to come here. Get the pack-horses loaded, for the chances are that we will have to leave in a hurry."

Then our hero had a short talk with Arietta and the princess.

The latter seemed to understand, and when she said she had no relatives living in the valley, and that she really would like to get out of it, it was easy to coax her into going.

It so happened that when Hop got to where he had left the rest the horses were already loaded, since Charlie and Jim knew very well they would have to get away from where they were.

Hop quickly told them all what was wanted of them and it was not long before they rode up to the adobe house.

"Get the treasures out of the house, boys," said Wild.

Then ensued a wild scramble and the four gold hunters nearly fell over each other in an effort to get more than their share, as they called it.

The house had just about been stripped when a blood-curdling yell came from the other side of the valley.

"Running Wolf has won," said Wild. "I reckon we must get out of here."

"This way!" exclaimed the princess, running to the left. "They will not come this way."

Arietta called her and made her get on her horse with her.

Then the Indian maiden burst into a fit of weeping.

Our friends were on the move now, and they had scarcely got behind a grove when they heard the clatter of hoofs.

The Apaches were riding through the valley.

"Let them go!" said Wild. "It is too bad we can't stop them from raiding the place, but they are too many for us."

Not until they reached the entrance to the passage to the other side of the high wall did our friends halt.

Double file they went through, Cheyenne Charlie leading the way with a blazing torch, which he had lighted the moment they got there.

It was with a sigh of relief that they all got through the passage and out of the cave.

As they emerged from it the sun suddenly went under and a low rumble sounded.

Then the reath rocked and a sound like thunder followed.

"An earthquake!" shouted Wild. "Get away from here!"

They rode like the wind, and those who turned and looked behind noticed a mighty upheaval right where the cave had been.

Then the surface of the ground flattened out, and up rose a few jagged peaks to mark the spot where the wall that had secluded the Valley of Gold had been!

It was a remarkable transformation—such a one as Young Wild West and his friends had never seen before.

After a while the sun came out, and then Wild suggested that they go back and take a look.

As Arietta turned to go with her lover Pearl Face fell back in her arms, limp and lifeless.

The poor girl had perished from sheer fright, and that ended the career of the Indian princess.

They were all sorry, of course, but there was so much to think about just then that the event was simply one of a vast string.

They all rode back, and when they climbed one of the patches of the cliffs left standing and looked on the other side there was naught but a bed of sand and stones where the Valley of Gold had been.

"This beats anything yet!" declared Young Wild West. "Come! let us get away from here. I doubt if we will be believed when we tell the story of the Valley of Gold."

"Well, we don't have ter tell it, anyhow," retorted Cheyenne Charlie, as he hugged a golden vase to keep it from slipping from his grasp.

There is not much more to add to this story, which might seem a bit queer to some of our readers. But when they read of the ancient temples that are still being found in Arizona, and which were once inhabited by Aztec Indians, they will better understand it.

Earthquakes happen out that way once in a while, too, and sometimes they change the geographical aspect of the country.

The Indian princess was given proper burial and then the journey back to Tucson was begun.

It is not necessary to state what happened on the way, for it was nothing worth mentioning, anyhow.

They all reached the town, and with the golden articles hidden in bags it was easy for them to escape being questioned.

The four old soldiers agreed to say nothing of their adventures until they got out of Arizona, and the day following their arrival in Tucson they set out for the East, taking with them their share of the gold.

It was one of the most strange adventures that Young Wild West and his friends had ever passed through, and it all came from the Apache Token and the trail that led to the Valley of Gold.

THE END.

Read "YOUNG WILD WEST 'SALTING' THE SALTERS; or, ARIETTA AND THE DEATH CHUTE," which will be the next number (316) of "Wild West Weekly."

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SOME GOOD ARTICLES.

An immense tray of solid silver, weighing more than ten thousand ounces, has just been made by a firm in London for an Oriental potentate. The tray is seven feet in diameter and is said to be the largest ever executed. It has been in the hands of the silversmiths for over a year. The tray will stand upon a solid silver table of the same size. The weight of the table complete will amount to about a ton.

Milena Sgambelli, a Dalmatian fisher girl, was bathing near Zara with other girls when two sharks rushed into the midst of them. Milena ran to the beach, on which she found an iron rod. Seizing this, she rushed boldly into the water again, striking at the sharks. She overbalanced herself and fell at full length in the water, when one of the sharks seized her leg in its mouth and bit it off above the knee. Her companions dragged Milena out, but she died from loss of blood.

From Germany comes news of a locomotive worked by steam and yet independent of fire of its own. The engine has just been completed at the Hohenzollern works at Dusseldorf, and it is of a type designed for shunting in explosive factories. Instead of carrying fire in its own boiler it is filled with steam from stationary boilers, and when so charged is capable of several hours' work. The first warming up occupies half an hour, and subsequent recharging can be done in a quarter of an hour. The apparatus is so simple that an unskilled workman is able to look after it. The absence of fire in a place where dynamite or gunpowder is being handled is the reason for the invention of this type of engine.

As there are no labor-saving machines in Corea, women's work is done by the crudest and hardest methods possible, from hulling rice with a heavy wood or stone pestle to washing clothes by beating them in the streams and ironing them with sticks. In order to iron, the clothes must always be ripped apart and wrapped around a wooden roller while damp; they are then beaten by either one or two women. It is surprising to see the gloss on the white calico and the sheen upon the linen produced by this method of ironing; it surpasses the dressing one sees in this country on newly bought linen. Since the people dress exclusively in white, the woman's day—and often much of the night, too—is spent in washing, ironing and sewing.

Consul-General Richard Guenther, of Frankfort, notes that at the annual meeting of the Association of German Engineers, lately held at Dresden, announcement was made that the great work of compiling and publishing the new technical dictionary, which was conducted under the auspices of the association, had to be stopped because it was found that the expenses would amount to more than four times the estimates. Mr. Guenther adds: "The great progress in science and industries had created a vast mass of new terms and matter largely in excess of what had been estimated at the beginning. The stoppage is to be greatly regretted, as the want of a new technical dictionary and encyclopædia is acutely felt by thousands of persons engaged in scientific research, in all lines of commerce and production, in literature, journalism, and in the administration of state and municipal government. It is, however, satisfactory to note that the executive board of the Association of German Engineers has made strenuous efforts to take up and complete the valuable work, and has succeeded in obtaining therefor the aid of the federal government of Germany and of the Ministry of Education of the Prussian kingdom."

GRINS AND CHUCKLES.

"I understand he has entered the state of matrimony." "Why, yes. He is traveling in Utah."

"Pop." "Yes, my son." "Did mamma ever punish you?" "Well, she married me, my boy."

Uncle Eben—Willie, can you tell me what an entertainment is? Willie—Yes, sir. It's something good to eat.

Letter to a Schoolmaster.—"My son will be unable to attend school to-day, for he has just shaved himself for the first time."

"She thinks her husband is a deep-dyed villain." "Why?" "Well, she's never been able to catch him doing anything wrong."

The Millionaire—Yes, I never give more than threepence for a cigar. Young Stonybroke—Ah, yes. You rich chaps can afford to smoke cheap cigars.

Tramp—Can you assist me along the road, mum? Lady of the House—Personally, I cannot; but I will unchain my dog, and I know he will be most pleased to do so."

A doctor was attending a dangerous case, where a Scotch butler was engaged. On calling in the forenoon, he said to Donald: "I hope your master's temperature is much lower to-day than it was last night." "I'm no sae very sure aboot that," replied the butler, "for he deed this morning."

"This village enjoys the reputation of being the birthplace of two members of the Legislature and one Congressman, does it not?" politely inquired the sojourner within its gates. "Nope," replied the landlord of the Pettyville tavern, who was a pessimistic old grouch, anyhow. "It just has it, that's all."

"Mother," said a little girl, looking up from her book, "what does 'transatlantic' mean?" "Oh, across the Atlantic, of course. Don't bother me!" "Does 'trans' always mean across?" "I suppose it does. If you don't stop bothering me with your questions you'll go to bed." "Then does 'transparent' mean a cross parent?" Ten minutes later that little girl was resting on her tiny couch.

The talkative man in the smoking-room was boring the company with his reminiscences of the great people he had met. "Last week," he said, "I spent a most delightful day with my friend, Lord Broadacres." "Indeed," said a gentleman in a corner, who had not hitherto spoken. "And so you don't recognize me as Lord Broadacres?" The boastful one instantly collapsed, and muttering some apology, left the room. "And I'm not Lord Broadacres at all," chuckled the gentleman as the door closed upon the discomfited one.

THE HIDDEN WEALTH

By COL. RALPH FENTON.

"Do you see yonder green isle in the distance?"

The one who asked the question was my fellow traveler, on board a fine steamer plying between New York and the West Indies, and just before sunset a small green island came in view, looking most inviting in the haze of the distance.

"Yes, it is a pretty spot, and doubtless in olden times was the resort of the Gulf buccaneers."

"It has a story since that time, and if you like, I will tell it you," replied Fred Fenton, for such was his name, and he continued to gaze upon the island with a look of interest, as though memories of a strange character were crowding upon him.

Seeing that I was waiting for his story, he said, having thrown away his cigar:

"Fifteen years ago I was on that island, helpless, and in despair, and the causes that led to it I will tell you of.

"When sixteen years of age I became a middy in the royal navy, and about the same time fell desperately in love with a pretty girl, some four years my junior, and whose old father was as proud as he was rich, and was willing to let daughter and money go for title and name, no matter who might possess the latter qualities in his estimation.

"But the young girl—Alfrida Doane was her name—returned my youthful regard, and when I went to sea we agreed that death alone could part us in the future, and, strange to say, when I returned from China seas three years after, we had both remained true to each other, but her father was already looking for a titled individual upon whom to bestow her hand, and his eyes fell upon my brother, who had just inherited the title and estates through my father's death.

"At fifteen Alfrida was a beautiful maiden, and promised to be a still more lovely woman, and as our family was poor, my brother, Sir Wilber, was willing to be sacrificed for a handsome heiress, and it was agreed between the father and himself that, when the young girl became eighteen, the exchange of money for rank would take place.

"But to this both Alfrida and myself objected, and a most stormy scene followed between old Banker Doane and myself, he telling me very plainly that I was a mere pauper, with nothing but my pay and a few hundred pounds a year to live on—a very comfortable sum, I assure you, though not a fortune.

" 'Make a fortune and you can marry any woman,' he very coldly told me.

"I replied that I would take his advice and marry Alfrida, at which he raved like a maniac.

"In the navy I felt that I could not make a fortune, and as there was no war going on, promotion was slow, so I resigned my commission, invested what money I had saved up, and could sell out my little inheritance for, in a mercantile house in London, and in one year lost every penny I had in the world.

"This was a bad beginning, and too proud to ask aid I went as a sailor before the mast, and in a very short while worked my way up to boatswain, and then third mate.

"I would, I think, have soon been in command of a brig, for the company whose vessel I was on seemed to like me; but one day as I sat on the deck, watching the passengers go on board a large clipper ship, a packet between Liverpool and Havana, I started suddenly at recognizing Banker Doane and his daughter.

"They were accompanied by his valet and Alfrida's maid, and it was evident, from their traps and baggage, they were going upon a voyage, and instantly my mind was made up—I would go on the ship, too.

"To get my luggage together, write my resignation and send it in to the owners, and then go on board the ship was the work of an hour.

"I secured a good stateroom and remained in it until the vessel was dashing down the channel.

"It was just twilight when I went on deck, and with a beating heart I recognized Alfrida pacing the deck and leaning upon her father's arm, and I kept aloof until the following day, when I again saw her, and alone, for it had come to blow, and the old banker was down in his berth, cursing himself for having been fooled into going on a pleasure voyage to the Indies and America.

"I can tell you, my friend, it was a surprise indeed, and a joyous one, when Alfrida recognized me.

For a long time we talked together, and she told me that it was her father's intention to remain away from England about a year, and upon their return home she was to marry my brother Wilber.

"And she added that it would drive my father wild to find that I was on board, for he had taken to hating me ever since I had told him I would one day marry his daughter, and match his fortune with one equal to his own.

"I confess it did not look as though I was going to keep my word, at the rate I had begun, but both Alfrida and myself had hope, and we again pledged our love, and she promised to wait for me for half a century.

"At length Doane came on deck, pale, ill, and impatient, but the sight of me on board cured his seasickness, and he swore like a sailor, and wanted the captain to put back and land me, or himself and daughter, but the clipper's commander had an inkling of how matters stood and simply enjoyed it.

"Well, all went well until we got into these waters, and then one night a hurricane struck us, we were hurled about like a straw, the captain was washed overboard, the first mate had his arm broken, and the next officer losing presence of mind, the crew and passengers called upon me to take the command, which I did, but it was of a sinking ship, and I felt that we must take to the lifeboats.

"I had them got ready and equipped with stores and water, and as they were filled with passengers and crew, I ordered them off, and thus all went well until I attempted to get on board the last boat, and in which was Alfrida and her father, the old man having asked to go with me, when a wave snapped the ropes, and I was left alone upon the sinking craft.

"It was a fearful night, and as dark as chaos, and the crew refused to risk their boat coming back to the ship after me, and unheeded the entreaties of Alfrida, and also her father, whose selfish fear for himself alone wanted to have me on board.

"The vessel was sinking fast, there was no other boat for me to take, and I gave myself up for lost, while the old wreck drove through the waters with terrible speed, and then suddenly was hurled upon the shore with a shock that threw me to the deck.

"Yonder island you see is the place where she went ashore, and the waves carried me to the beach, where I was thrown more dead than alive, but I struggled hard for life, and reaching a place of safety sank down to rest.

"When I awoke, or revived, for I believe I was unconscious, it was broad daylight, the beach was strewn with wrecks, the sea was still rough, and not a sail was in sight upon the boundless waters.

"I gathered the water-soaked food, built me a hut and sat down to wait, having discovered that I was on a comfortable

island, where I at least would not starve, although I knew it to be uninhabited.

"It is said a 'fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind,' and I found myself making daily pilgrimages to a lonely spot where was a grave, a rude board at its head, and I felt that the only one who slept beneath had, like me, been a victim of the sea.

"Upon the headboard was cut, with a knife, and skillfully executed too—

" 'BOB BULWARK,
A seaman of the British brig, Bird.
Wrecked on this island
Sept. 10th, 18—.
Stranger, let his ashes rest in peace.'

"With my back against the tree that sheltered his grave, I was wont to spend long days wondering if I ever would be rescued and learn the fate of Alfrida, and cursing my ill-fortune, for the maiden had promised to secretly marry me upon our arrival in Havana.

"One night, as I sat gazing out over the moonlit waters, my eyes caught sight of a small sail, and, watching it closely, I saw that it was standing directly in-shore, towards a cove above which hung the high cliff upon which was the grave.

"Nearer and nearer it came, and my heart bounded with joy, for at last had freedom come to me, and not too soon, I can assure you, for the ship's provisions I had gathered were giving out rapidly.

"But it seemed strange to me that so small a craft, a little sloop of five tons, should be coming to that out-of-the-way place, and I set down the crew as having been wrecked on some other island, and were making their way back to the nearest port.

"Dropping anchor close ashore, and running in as though they knew the waters well, the crew of two men came on shore, carrying something upon their shoulders, and began to ascend the cliff, heading in my direction.

"I at once sought a place of concealment in some bushes near the grave, and soon the men drew near and halted.

" 'You're the boss pilot, Dick, for here she is, as natural as life," said one of the men, glancing at the head-board, and throwing at his feet a shovel.

" 'I told you I knew a secret, for I was here when poor Bob Bulwark was planted, and there were five of us as did it; one of them was washed off the schooner in a storm, another was killed in a fight with a cruiser; the captain and lieutenant were garroted in Havana for piracy, and I had just escaped from prison after fifteen years, but here's the spot, lad, and I'm rich at last.'

" 'And you buried it here fifteen years ago?'

" 'We did, and there's enough to make a hundred men rich, if it's there, and I think it is, for the grave hasn't been touched, it seems.'

" 'And my share is to be one-fifth, Dick?'

" 'Yes, that's what I promised you for lending me your sloop and coming with me. Now, let us go to work.'

"Eagerly I watched the two men throw the earth from the supposed grave, now well knowing that a treasure, and not a human form, lay beneath, for that one of the men was the last of a pirate crew that had buried it there, I felt confident after hearing his words.

"At length the shovel of one struck a hard substance, and a moment after the man addressed as Dick handed up a small keg, and then another, and another, and all of them were filled with gold.

"A large box filled with gold and silver trinkets and precious stones followed, until a fortune indeed lay in the light of the moon, and its glittering wealth seemed to craze the man who had come for the treasure, as springing from the open grave, he turned and brought his shovel down upon the head of his comrade with terrible force, crying out:

" 'Fool, die; for did you think I would let any man live and share this fortune with me?'

" 'Oh, Dick!' burst from the man's lips, and he sank forward and fell into the open pit.

"With the frenzy of a madman the murderer shoveled in the dirt upon him, and then began to dance in wild glee. Then was my time to act, and I came from my place of concealment.

"With a wild cry he started back, and then seizing the spade, rushed upon me.

"I warned him off, retreating rapidly, but it did no good, and knowing that he would murder me if I permitted it, I dodged his blow and grappled with him.

"Like a madman he fought, biting and scratching like a tiger; but I am a powerful man, and finding he was determined to kill me, wrenched his knife from his hand and drove it into his breast, just as he thrust his left hand into his bosom for a pistol.

"Into the grave I placed his body, and then, almost maddened myself by the gold before me, seized a couple of the kegs, and rushed down to the sloop with them.

"I found it, as I had expected, unoccupied, and a staunch little craft, and, having gotten my treasure on board, set sail from the island, and within a week's time ran into Pensacola.

"Jealous of the secret I had, I was most careful, and in small quantities carried it to my hotel, where I deposited it in a stout trunk, and, selling the sloop, started for New York in a packet ship.

"Once there, to my joy, I learned that Alfrida and her father, with another of the boats, had arrived in safety, and, turning my treasure into bank notes, I purchased a handsome house, invested my fortune in the shipping business, and set sail for England, where I arrived just in time; for believing me dead, Alfrida had promised to become the wife of my brother Wilber.

"My coming changed the tide of affairs, for she became my bride, and returned with me to the United States, and a happier family than ours I know you never saw, and will say so when you visit us, as you have promised, upon your return.

"Now, do you wonder that I look at yonder island with interest, having passed one long year upon it alone, suffering, and in sorrow, and in the end found there my fortune?"

"It is very wrong to tell a falsehood," said his mother to little Jimmie, whom she had caught in one. "Then we're both offul sinners, ain't we, maw?" queried Jimmie. "Both! What do you mean?" "Why, you told Missus Smith yesterday that you hoped she'd call again, an' after she wuz gone you said you wished she'd never come again."

"Dey's so many chillun in my family we get tired lookin' roun' fer names for 'em, so we done name de twin gals Poverty en Riches." "You done wrong," said Brother Dickey. "You'll never git 'em off you' han's—kase all men'll quote de Bible on you, en say 'Gimme neither Poverty nor Riches!' "

Major Dix—Do you think it's goin' to rain to-morrow, Uncle Isham? Uncle Isham—I dunno, honey. It's mighty hard ter prognosticate. When de Lawd had charge ob de weathah I could tell sumfin' erbout it, but sence dis here weathah bureau dun bin runnin' it Uncle Isham's had ter gib it up.

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